









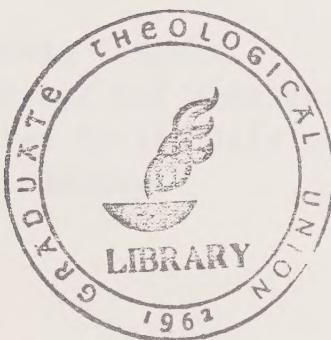
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C O N T E N T S

FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

Kwang Pin Lin  
Recent trends of thought regarding  
the Kingdom of God

Mert Melvin Lampson  
Evangelical and mystical piety as  
reflected in the life and teachings  
of John Wesley











RECENT TRENDS OF THOUGHT REGARDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

By

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

ORIGIN OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MEANING OF  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### ORIGIN OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The central message of Jesus' teaching was the "kingdom of God." The question as to what the term really meant is still at issue. Probably the subject will be found to be inexhaustible--so inexhaustible that no small heart is able to comprehend the depth and width of the great Galilean mind. Harnack in his book, What Is Christianity, has rightly described it:

That Jesus' message is so great and so powerful lies in the fact that it is so simple and on the other hand so rich; so simple as to be exhausted in each of the leading thoughts which he uttered; so rich that every one of those thoughts seems to be inexhaustible and the full meaning of the sayings and parables beyond our reach. But more than that--he himself stands behind everything that he said.<sup>1</sup>

A new chapter in the history of New Testament study has been opened by the work of F. D. Maurice<sup>2</sup> regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> Harnack, What Is Christianity, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> F. D. Maurice lived at Normanston, London, 1805-1872; he was a professor at King's College and a founder of Queen's College. He was a spiritual leader of the Christian Socialists. The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven consists of eighteen lectures on the Gospel According to Luke.



subject, The Kingdom of Christ, in which he advocated the kingdom of God as the true source of every effective social amelioration. After this work, he published another, entitled The Kingdom of Heaven, a series of sermons on St. Luke's Gospel, first published in 1864, which created no small stir among the Biblical scholars. In 1866 J. R. Seeley's Ecce Homo<sup>1</sup> made its first appearance. In that book he concluded that Christ described himself as king, and at the same time as king of the kingdom of God,--in other words, as a king representing the majesty of the invisible king of a theocracy,--and that he claimed the character first of founder, next of legislator, thirdly, in a certain high and peculiar sense, of judge of a new divine society. About twenty-four years later A. B. Bruce<sup>2</sup> wrote The Kingdom of God. Dr. Bruce made at least a twofold contribution to the world in his book: first, he introduced readers to the critical study of the Gospels; and, second, he brought into vivid and reverent prominence the historical figure of the Man, Christ Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>

Ecce Homo is a survey of the life and work of Jesus Christ, published in London, J. M. Dent & Co., 1864; in New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1907. Sir John Robert Seeley lived in London 1834-1895. He was a historian and author of many works. He wrote a short history of Napoleon I for Encyclopaedia Britannica, and was also editor of the Students' Guide, University of Cambridge, 1863.

<sup>2</sup>

A. B. Bruce lived in 1831-1899, and was a professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis in Free Church College, Glasgow.



On the whole, after the appearance of Bruce's work, synoptic criticism begins to lift its head; the critical approach to the study of Jesus commences. Moreover, the bearing of the Son of Man in the similitudes of Enoch upon Messianic passages in the Gospels is taken into account, and yet the Apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus is still given a very subordinate place,<sup>1</sup>--but not until the work of J. Weiss was reinforced and supplemented by Albert Schweitzer. From this time on, we can see how the different schools of thought have come to the front and hoisted their flags to proclaim their sphere of interests. There have been numerous trends of thought since. In order to avoid falling into the pit of complication, the author of this thesis proposes to systematize the examination of the subject by discussing three general types of thinking--namely, "spiritualizing interpretations," "eschatological interpretations," and "social interpretations," using Prof. McCown's phraseologies from his book, The Genesis of the Social Gospel. They will now be taken up in order.

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<sup>1</sup>

Expository Times, Vol. 48 (1937), p. 393.



CHAPTER II  
SPIRITUALIZING INTERPRETATIONS



## CHAPTER II

### SPIRITUALIZING INTERPRETATIONS

This topic requires three subdivisions: namely, The Kingdom of God as Community Life, The Kingdom of God as a Blessing to the Poor, and The Kingdom of God as an Inward Relation with God.

#### The Kingdom of God as Community Life

For the characteristic representative of this school of thought, one has to go back to Ritschl<sup>1</sup> for enlightenment. Ritschl identifies the kingdom of God with the Kantian moral concept of a society and with a claim that it was the moral view of what the New Testament means by the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup> In his great monograph, published

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<sup>1</sup>

Ritschl is one of the outstanding theologians of the last century,--the son of a Lutheran pastor, and a student and admirer of Hegel and Baur. He labored for twenty-five years before his first disciple, Herrmann, acknowledged his leadership. Lemme, formerly a pupil, afterwards a critic, says: "Ritschl was a historian of dogma of the first rank.... There is scarcely an epoch of Church history on which new light has not been cast by his investigations. He was a critic of rare acuteness, whose exhaustive treatment of theological notions has scarcely had its equal. In both relations Ritschl has given a powerful impetus to German theology." (Orr, The Ritschlian Theology, p. 4.) His monumental work is Justification and Reconstruction.

<sup>2</sup>

Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, pp. 150-152.



in England in 1870, he defines Jesus' view of the kingdom as "the organization of humanity through action inspired by love."<sup>1</sup> He considers the organization of the community as purely a moral task that springs out of the love of God.

In other words, Ritschl attempts

...a speculative deduction of the kingdom of God from the love of God, ultimately from the personality of God. On one hand, he demonstrates the personality of God to the love of God. By this inference he tries to get from love of God to the kingdom of God. .... The love of God expresses the purpose of God. .... The purpose of God determines the direction of the will of God. .... Hence the love of God is the ultimate cause and final reason of the world. The establishment of the Christian community is the ultimate cause of God's love, the humanity as organized in the kingdom of God is the object of God's love.<sup>2</sup>

According to Ritschl, God needs the community through which his loving kindness can be expressed, and in which his righteousness can be realized; not the righteousness which means "to destroy those, if there be any such, who persistently oppose themselves to the realization of the purpose of God in the kingdom of God," as it has been so often emphasized in both the New and Old Testaments,<sup>3</sup>—but a righteousness which works his purpose, the purpose of love. To quote Garvie again:

<sup>1</sup>

Ritschl, Justification and Reconstruction, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Garvie, The Ritschlian Theology, pp. 253-263.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., pp. 260-261.



The kingdom of God is what God lives and works for. He does not vindicate his righteousness by punishing sin. He realizes it by establishing the kingdom of God. He does not look backward on the sinner's past, but forward to the sinner's future; he does not regard him as an actual transgressor of his law, but as a possible citizen of his kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, according to Ritschl, God's intention of establishing this kingdom of his is due not only to the motives of his love and righteousness but also to his positive motive of forgiveness.

God loves sinners, and forgives sin, not because he is morally indifferent, but because this love and forgiveness are necessary as means of establishing the kingdom of God, which God has chosen as his own purpose.... According to the orthodox view, the sinner is forgiven for the sake of what Christ has done, according to Ritschl's view for the sake of what he may become as a citizen of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Again:

The Christian community, which makes the kingdom of God its task...owes its existence to the fact that the Son of God is its Lord, it is obedient to Him, the community of Christ is consequently only the point of reference of the love of God, because the love in which God embraces His Son and assures Him His uniqueness (Mark 1.11, ix.7; John xv.9, xvii.24; Col. 1.13; Eph. 1.6) through Him becomes operative for those who belong to Christ as His disciples or as His community. .... Those who belong to the Christian community are brought within the influence of Christ, they are reconciled, forgiven; for them there is victory over the world, victory over evil and death. In a

<sup>1</sup>

Garvie, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., pp. 316, 317.



derivative way Christians can come to share His dominion over the world.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is here not only acknowledged as the Lord of the Kingdom--both the Redeemer and Founder--but also as the revealer of God's love.

Finally, according to Ritschl, the Christian community has a double aspect: from one point of view it is the Church, and from another it is the kingdom of God. The former is the Christian community at worship, and the latter is the Christian community dedicated to the task of organizing the community by love. The first is religious, personal and communal, while the second is ethical and social. One assumes the ground of blessedness, a divine gift from above; the other gives tasks to which Christians are called. In the first aspect, it is the expression of the Christian faith in God; in the last aspect, it is the expression of the Christian life in action. These two forms of expressions are mutually dependent and reciprocally serviceable.<sup>2</sup>

Ritschl's conception of the kingdom of God, "the organization of humanity through action inspired by love," was accepted by his followers, especially Herrmann and Kaftan. Like Ritschl, they conceived the establishment of the kingdom from the ethical motive.

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<sup>1</sup> Garvie, op. cit., pp. 258-260.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 334-345.



In his book on The Communion of the Christian with God, Herrmann<sup>1</sup> regards the kingdom as "the universal moral community, the aspect under which humanity is included in God's purpose for Himself." "The reality of the kingdom of God," according to the writer, "must in some way or another have seized a man, and positively influenced his thinking, if he is to be capable of trusting God in the Christian sense."<sup>2</sup>

For Kaftan,<sup>3</sup> Jesus preached the kingdom of God as our highest good and as our supreme ideal." The essence of a religion, he states, is to be discovered in one feature: What is the character of the good which it desires to offer to its adherents? The highest good, according to him, is a heavenly and not an earthly good, the possession of which depends upon human moral activity in the world.<sup>4</sup>

The Roman Catholic identifies the kingdom of God on earth with the Church. To quote Ritschl:

<sup>1</sup> Herrmann was born in Germany 1846, and died in 1922. He claimed to be Lutheran, and bases his book on Luther's statements.

<sup>2</sup> Garvie, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Kaftan was born in Germany in 1848, and has published two books, Faith and Dogma and Do We Need a New Dogma. The first book is directed against Dreyer's undogmatic Christianity, and the second justifies criticisms contained in the first.

<sup>4</sup> Garvie, op. cit., pp. 239-240.



...It [Catholicism] sets itself up not merely as an institution possessed of the sacraments by which the power of Christ's redemption is propagated, but also as the kingdom of God in the present, as the community in which, through the obedience of men and States to the Pope, Divine righteousness is professedly realized.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Loisy can be taken as one of the representatives of this school of thought:

The Church is the Divine Society, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which preserves its identity by continuous adaptation to a changing environment.... It develops and evolves in accordance with its own destiny, and only by such development it preserves its identity.

....The identity of a man is not ensured by making him return to the cradle.... To be identical with the religion of Jesus, it has no more need to reproduce exactly the forms of the Galilean gospel than a man has need to preserve at fifty the proportions, features, and manner of life of the day of his birth, in order to be the same individual.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore the Church--by reason of its life of faith, worship, and work, which are the continuous growing manifestation and condition of the Christian life--is in itself the essence of Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

In his article on Jesus and the Kingdom of God,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconstruction, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> A liberal French Catholic writer, born in 1857; he denied the existence of a Johannine historical tradition. In his writing, he scored strong points against Harnack's What Is Christianity?

<sup>3</sup> Loisy, The Gospel and the Church, pp. 170-173.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 162-164.

<sup>5</sup> Expository Times, Vol. 46 (1934), p. 214.



R. N. Flew of Cambridge says a similar interpretation is taken by the Protestant scholars from some of the passages in the New Testament,--i. e., a scholar such as Kirsov Lake declares in his commentary that all passages in Acts (1.3, viii.13, xix.8, xxviii.23, xxviii.31, xx.25) may be taken to mean the kingdom of God as the Church.<sup>1</sup>

If we do not take for granted the correctness of the interpretations of Ritschl and his followers--Catholic and Protestant--regarding the kingdom of God as the Church, where can we find proof to defend their arguments? If those passages described by Lake are taken to prove the argument, it would seem that the proof is not convincing, for even Lake himself is doubtful about his own interpretation. In a passage of his commentary, Lake guards himself by admitting that in none of these passages from Acts is the eschatological meaning decisively excluded by the context, while in another passage he reaffirms himself by saying that

...any of the possible interpretations are conceivable, but the usage of Acts suggests, though it far from proves, that Kingdom of God here means the Church--the society of believers in Jesus, who through his representatives, using the power of his name, receive the Holy Spirit which cleanses and saves.<sup>2</sup>

One can see that there is no sufficient evidence to prove what the New Testament writers really mean by "Church." The

<sup>1</sup> Lake and Others, The Beginnings of Christianity, IV, pp. 4, 91.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.



next question is, can we find any proof from the early Church Fathers, the readers of the New Testament who identified the kingdom with the Church? To quote Dr. Flew:

With the doubtful exception of a sentence in St. Augustine, there are no passages in the first four centuries where the identification is certainly made. Usually in the Fathers the kingdom is regarded as future; in Clement of Alexandria and Origen it is also inward and spiritual. Even in St. Ambrose the definition of the Kingdom as a society is not to be found. .... Patristic interpretations may not be sufficient to decide a disputed point of exegesis, but when we read of the "late" conception of the Kingdom as meaning "the Church" it is surely significant that the conception is very late indeed.<sup>1</sup>

To conclude this discussion, one must be mindful of the fact that there was great opposition to the Ritschlian school of thought as well as inspired support. The opposition declared that the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus was primarily eschatological rather than ethical. The pioneer of such a view was Ritschl's own son-in-law, Johannes Weiss, whose position will be examined in Chapter IV, Eschatological Interpretations of the Kingdom of God.

#### The Kingdom of God as a Blessing to the Poor<sup>2</sup>

The second type of the spiritualizing interpretation is the explanation of the kingdom of God as a blessing to the

<sup>1</sup>

Expository Times, Vol. 48 (1934), p. 215.

<sup>2</sup>

See McCown's Genesis of the Social Gospel, on spiritualizing interpretations.



poor. The word "poor" is used in the material rather than the spiritual sense. Prof. A. B. Bruce represents one of the important figures in this school of thought. Prof. McCown, in his Genesis of the Social Gospel, comments: "Few have written on Jesus and the Gospels with more charm and insight than Alexander B. Bruce."<sup>1</sup>

Bruce, in his Galilean Gospel,<sup>2</sup> gives a very interesting discussion on the Beatitudes. He thinks the utterances of Jesus in Luke are authentic. It is credible that Jesus had some kind of blessing for the many. The poor in spirit, the mourners for sin, the hungerers for righteousness, are a select band, and only a few of them were likely to be found in any crowd that heard Jesus preach. But the poor, the hungry, the sad are always a large company, embracing probably nine-tenths of those to whom the Sermon on the Mount was preached. Had Jesus no message of consolation for this majority? Prof. Bruce says that he had. He cared for them, sympathized with them, for He was the poor man's friend. He meant to say that the poor man's era had come. "He refers to the kingdom of God as a friend of the poor in our time might refer to Australia or the western prairie lands of America as a sphere in which industry might

<sup>1</sup>McCown, op. cit., pp. 6-8.<sup>2</sup>Bruce, Galilean Gospel, pp. 41-51.



find for itself ample and hopeful scope." Furthermore, the kingdom of God, according to Prof. Bruce, is a reward to the poor on account of their misery. To quote him again: "Jesus meant to say this: just because you are poor, and hungry, and sad, the kingdom of heaven is nearer to you than others. Your very misery may be the means of leading you into the kingdom." Then did Jesus mean that to be poor is a virtue? According to Bruce, Jesus certainly did not regard poverty in itself as a virtue, but He did teach that material possessions created difficulties in the pursuit of eternal life from which poor men by their very poverty were exempt. He sought disciples among the ranks of the poor, believing that they were likely to be found there. The result justified his policy; for the kingdom Jesus preached drew its members mainly from the humbler class of society. Moreover, all spiritual movements find their earliest and most enthusiastic supporters among the same classes--the poor, the sorrowful, even the disreputable. The well-to-do class seems to be indifferent, or at least non-enthusiastic about the blessing from above. It is the humbler class of people who receive the blessing of the kingdom of God,--not the blessing of the outward state, but the blessing of the soul. In other words, as A. B. Bruce says, "the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of God far outweigh all the social and economic injustices and the consequent physical woes and moral disabilities under



which the poor suffer."<sup>1</sup>

William Sanday,<sup>2</sup> perhaps one of the outstanding English authorities of the late nineteenth century on the life of Jesus, presents even more clearly this spiritualizing estimate of the teaching of Jesus. To summarize his views:

The Matthean gloss [on the first Beatitude] is in any case right in a sense.... The qualities commended ["poor in spirit," "meek," "merciful," "pure in heart," "peace makers"] are all of the gentle, submissive, retiring order....the Christian ideal,... stands out in marked contrast to most other ideals of what is admirable in man.

The words are addressed only to the disciples. "The type of character described bears on its face the marks of being intended for the little community of Christians." The conditions of entrance to the community are clearly laid down: "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 18.3). The entrance into the kingdom is something more than a deliberate act of the man himself; it is a self-surrender to divine influence. These influences are the kingdom of heaven:

<sup>1</sup>

McCown, op. cit., p. 7;  
cf, Bruce, op. cit., pp. 41-51.

<sup>2</sup>

Born in 1843 in England; Lady Margaret Professor, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford; Hon. Fellow of Exeter College; Fellow of British Academy; Chaplain in Ordinary to the King.



The kingdom of God is not the theocracy of the Old Testament, nor the eschatological kingdom of the Apocalypses, nor the Christian Church of the present day, or of the Middle Ages, or of the Fathers. These are phases through which it passes; but it outgrows one after another. .... The *βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ* [kingdom of God] denotes certain divine forces of laws which are at work in the world, and also the sphere or area where these forces or laws are operative.<sup>1</sup>

Another scholar who supports this type of spiritualizing interpretation is Orello Cone,<sup>2</sup> who protests that the current interpretations are not true to Jesus and His times:

We should be on our guard against substituting our idea of the kingdom of God for that of Jesus and his contemporaries, and against intruding spiritual and figurative meanings where they are not required or justified by context. ...in the kingdom of God, which was to be established upon the renewed earth, the "good things" would not be lacking. ...the Beatitudes were addressed to the disciples.... The unqualified "ye the poor" can mean only the poor in worldly possessions. These are declared to be "blessed" as poor and as disciples--as poor disciples.

Why does Jesus pronounce such as "blessed"? There are two reasons given by Cone. First, Old Testament prophecy had promised the messianic blessedness to the poor and the wretched. Second, Jesus had a strong sympathy for the poor, who were more susceptible to the acceptance of his message. They who are his disciples are blessed in their poverty, in

<sup>1</sup>

Sanday, Outlines of the Life of Christ, pp. 84-87, quoted by McCown, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>

Cone lived 1835-1905; an editor of International Handbooks to New Testament; Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature, St. Lawrence University.



spite of it, and even because of it, for eventually, in the coming kingdom, compensation will be made for all they have suffered through their earthly want.<sup>1</sup>

In reference to the position held by Cone, Prof. McCown raises, in his Genesis of the Social Gospel, this question:

Is this all that Jesus meant? If so, if in the Beatitudes he had only his little group of disciples in mind, it is difficult to see how he had any message for the great mass of the poor, the sad, the hungry; certainly he had no message that applied to their poverty, their hunger, or their sorrow. He addressed himself only to the small fraction of men who, besides being poor, were sorry for sin, and hungry for righteousness. There is no direct social gospel if this be true.<sup>2</sup>

All of these spiritualizing reinterpretations of the teachings of Jesus constitute a gospel which exactly fits the present organization of society for acquisition.<sup>3</sup>

If the poor do not need to struggle for the economic equalities in this society because they will have blessedness in heaven, then Jesus must have approved of the accumulation of wealth on the part of the rich. As a matter of fact, Jesus objects to the laying up of treasures on earth for their own sake, and shows great sympathy for the poor by urging the rich to sell what they have and to distribute it to the poor.

<sup>1</sup> McCown, op. cit., p. 9; cf. Cone, Rich and Poor in the New Testament, p. 123 f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

1000 feet above the surface of the sea, and the water is cold but not  
dangerous. The temperature of the water is about 58° F.  
  
The water is very clear, and the fish are numerous and of various  
species. The most abundant species is the striped bass, which  
is found in great numbers throughout the entire area. Other  
common species include the bluefish, weakfish, and menhaden.  
There are also several species of sharks, such as the hammerhead  
and tiger shark, which are occasionally seen in the area.  
  
The fishing industry in the area is quite large, and there are  
several commercial fishing boats operating in the area. The  
fishing boats are mostly owned by local fishermen, who have  
been fishing in the area for many years. The fishing boats are  
equipped with modern fishing equipment, such as sonar and  
depth finders, which help them to locate fish more easily.  
The fishing industry is an important part of the local economy,  
and it provides employment for many people in the area. The  
fishing industry is also an important source of income for the  
local government, as it generates tax revenue and provides  
employment for many people in the area.

## The Kingdom of God as an Inward Relation with God

Under the topic of spiritualizing interpretations, two distinct types have been discussed: the interpretation of the kingdom as a community, and as a blessing to the poor. We shall now deal with the third type--the kingdom of God as an inward relation with God; in other words, the kingdom of God in the heart of man.

One must take Adolf Harnack as the dominant representative of this type of interpretation, although he is also interested in the social interpretation. Regarding Harnack, I quote Prof. McCown's comment:

Harnack was Ritschl's creative and dominating successor, who for one quarter of a century was without doubt the most famous and influential of Ritschlians in Europe, England, and America. He was a good lecturer and he drew about him, at Leipzig, a throng of enthusiastic young men. When he delivered his lectures on "The Nature of Christianity" at Berlin in the winter semester of 1899-1900, six hundred students of all faculties crowded his lecture room at seven o'clock in the mornings--winter mornings to be noted. In ten years, including translations, one hundred thousand copies of the book, so it is reckoned, were sold. The work for which he is most famous is his History of Dogma. .... His services in the field of New Testament have been innumerable to mention, both criticism and interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

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"Harnack frankly rejects the Fourth Gospel, which, he says, 'does not emanate or profess to emanate from the apostle John, and cannot be taken as an historical authority in the ordinary sense of the word!'" McCown, op. cit.



Regarding Harnack, William Sanday says:

Apart from his astonishing rapidity, range, and power of production, apart from his extreme keenness of insight, brilliance of combination, and fertility of ideas, there is something about Harnack's writings that attracts us more than those of almost any of his country-men. It is an instance of the way in which individual genius soars above national peculiarities. Harnack has not only all the German virtues in the highest degree, but he has others that are less distinctly German--a width and generosity of outlook, a freedom from pedantry, a sympathy and understanding for human weakness, that are all his own.<sup>1</sup>

Harnack's book, What is Christianity?--which is a stenographic report of a series of lectures of his,--appeared in 1900. He goes back to the earliest days of Christianity and finds his answer there. His answer is that Christianity is the gospel, and the gospel is contained in the teaching of Jesus. That teaching may be summed up under three headings:

- (1) The Kingdom of God and Its Coming
- (2) God, the Father, and the Infinite Value of the Soul
- (3) The Higher Righteousness and the Commandment of Love

#### (1) The Kingdom of God and Its Coming

For Harnack, the kingdom of God is susceptible of different meanings. Firstly, "it is something supernatural, a gift from above, not a product of ordinary life." Secondly, it is a purely religious blessing, the inner link with the living God.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, it is the rule of God, not in an

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<sup>1</sup> Sanday, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, What is Christianity, p. 61.



external sense, but the rule of the Holy God in the heart of the individual, by "entering his soul and laying hold of it,"<sup>1</sup> for "God Himself is His power." It will come as men open their hearts to God and to His influence. Fourthly, "it is the most important experience that a man can have, that on which everything else depends; it permeates and dominates his whole existence, because sin is forgiven and misery vanished."<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, everything that is dramatic in the external and historical sense has vanished, and all the external hopes for the future are gone also. What it actually does is to remain in the nature of spiritual force, "a power which sinks into a man within; 'the kingdom of God is within you'."<sup>3</sup>

(2) God, the Father, and the Infinite Value of the Soul

The second line of thought in reference to this subject is "God as the Father, and the human soul so ennobled that it can and does unite with Him." The Lord's Prayer indicates the intimacy of the inner relation between man and God, and it exhibits certainly the steady faith of the man who knows that he is safe in God. "It is based on the gospel of the Fatherhood of God applied to the whole life; to

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<sup>1</sup> Harnack, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-61.



be an inner union with God's will and God's kingdom, and joyous certainty of the possession of eternal blessings....<sup>1</sup> Man has the highest value because he can say 'My Father'."<sup>2</sup> Jesus was the first to bring to light the true value of every human soul.

(3) The Higher Righteousness  
and the Commandment of Love

The final feature in the teaching of Jesus is higher righteousness and the commandment of love. "To represent the Gospel as an ethical message is no depreciation of its value.... Nevertheless, there is a sphere of ethical thought which is peculiarly expressive of Jesus' gospel." Firstly, it is a gospel of righteousness free from self-seeking and from technical observance of good works. Secondly, all questions of morality depend on one's disposition and intention. "It is the righteousness that will stand when the depths of the heart are probed." Thirdly, the moral principle that Jesus conceived has only one motive--the motive of love. Love is something that remains when the soul dies to itself; it is the love that serves, and it is the new life that has already begun. Fourthly, Jesus combines religion and morality, which find full expression in love and humility; "humility is not a virtue by itself, but it is pure

<sup>1</sup>

Harnack, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., p. 67.



receptivity." The love of God and the love of one's neighbor are placed side by side. "The love of one's neighbour is the only practical proof on earth of that love of God which is strong in humility."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the principal essence of Jesus' teaching; the kingdom of God in the heart of man which finds its expression in love and service, and which has come to men, because of the infinite value of the human soul. In other words, religion must be ethical "for the highest good of man," which is identical with the kingdom of God, the reign of love in the life of the individual.

Harnack's declaration of belief has made considerable stir in the Protestant world, particularly in Germany. Criticisms of Harnack have been made as follow:

(1) The Biblical scholars claim that Harnack's analysis rests purely on the basis of his own rationalization and does not give sufficient importance to the background of contemporary thought in its account of Jesus' teaching, and that the teaching of Jesus can only be determined by a critical discussion of the gospel texts,--not the texts with doubtful meaning, but the texts which are free from ambiguity.<sup>2</sup>

(2) The eschatologists hold that Harnack modernizes Jesus and ignores the eschatological teachings of Jesus, and

<sup>1</sup>

Harnack, op. cit., pp. 71-75.

<sup>2</sup>

Loisy, The Gospel and the Church, p. 11.



therefore fails to follow the historical procedure of interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

(3) Students of the social gospel criticize Harnack for reducing the social application of Jesus' teaching to too narrow limits when he says:

Firm resistance must be offered to all attempts to read into the Gospel any other social ideal than this: you are accountable to God for all the gifts you have received, and so for your possessions also; you are bound to use them in the service of your neighbour.<sup>2</sup>

(4) In particular, Abbé Loisy,<sup>3</sup> a liberal Roman Catholic writer, refutes the whole position of Harnack's interpretations by declaring that:

(a) The kingdom of God is not "an inward influence" in the teaching of Jesus. It is primarily a future event, involving the end of the world.<sup>4</sup>

(b) The teaching on the Fatherhood of God was not the central theme in Jesus' message. The conception of God as the Father was traditional in its origin, and therefore did not imply any metaphysical relation between Jesus and God in its original teaching.<sup>5</sup> When Jesus spoke of God as Father

<sup>1</sup> Schweizer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack and Herrmann, Essays on the Social Gospel, quoted in McCown, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Inglis, "What is Christianity," Expository Times, Vol. 46 (1934), p. 402.

<sup>4</sup> Loisy, op. cit., pp. 56-66.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87.



and of Himself as Son, He meant that He was the Messiah, "the earthly representative of God...not only as the messenger or prophet of the Kingdom," but as "its principal agent and predestined one."<sup>1</sup>

(c) In the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus, the higher righteousness and the commandment of love cannot be emphasized in the manner attempted by Harnack. Jesus was a religious rather than a moral teacher, and His religion was apocalyptic in character; that is, it was dominated by the thought of the immediate coming of the kingdom. "Love...is not an end in itself; charity leads to the Kingdom--sacrificing the temporal to gain the eternal."<sup>2</sup>

(d) Finally, the essence of Christianity cannot be centered in the teachings of Jesus, but it can be found only in the experience of the Church. The Gospels as they stand, according to Loisy, are the work of the second generation of believers, and they represent a picture of Jesus which has already been colored by legend and tradition; and it is, therefore, the difficult task of the students of the historical criticism to eliminate the legend and the tradition and to show us the historical Jesus as He actually was.<sup>3</sup> In order to find the real essence of Christianity, we must

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<sup>1</sup>

Loisy, op. cit., pp. 91-97

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., pp. 68, 70, 101.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., pp. 95-96, 37-39.



come back to the present,--that is, to the Church.

Loisy, in some respects is right in his criticism of Harnack, but he himself has failed to think of his own flaws. Two general, unfavorable criticisms have been made regarding Loisy's position: (1) He criticizes Harnack for being purely rational and untrue to the historical facts in his presentation; whereas he himself creates the teachings of Jesus--not from Jesus' life but rather from the legends based upon the faith and worship of the early Church. Loisy has failed to see the significance of historical facts and tries to reduce these facts to faith, worship and work of the Church. (2) Loisy identifies the Church with Christianity, and makes the Church an incarnation of Jesus' teachings. The Church as it stands has been imperfect and is imperfect on account of the moral and spiritual defects of its members. Surely we cannot find the essence of Christianity in the Church!



CHAPTER III  
ESCHATOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS



## CHAPTER III

### ESCHATOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

#### The Beginning of Eschatological Interpretation

When it was proved that the modern conception of the kingdom of God made popular by Ritschlianism was not the conception of Jesus, there arose a school of thought which held that Jesus' conception was neither social nor ethical, but eschatological. All modern interpretations molded upon the modern social ideals, as well as individual modes of thinking, must be eliminated. In 1892 there appeared a challenging book, The Preaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God, seventy-six pages in length, written by Johannes Weiss,<sup>1</sup> son of Professor Bernhard Weiss and son-in-law of Albrecht Ritschl. In this little book the young pioneer depicts the kingdom of God not as love to God and service to man, nor--as has been generally supposed--as partly present and partly future, but as wholly future and wholly transcendental or supernatural. According to Weiss, one cannot take a middle ground for the basis of interpretation; it must be either

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Son of the veteran Prof. Bernhard Weiss of Berlin and born at Kiel in 1863. Johannes Weiss was Professor at Marburg; he and his famous father were both noted in the New Testament field.



eschatological or non-eschatological.<sup>1</sup> Weiss ignores the latter and lays stress upon the former. The Kingdom of God in Jesus' conception is wholly in the future, as is implied in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come."

...Being still to come, it is at present supra-mundane. .... It is present, not literally and strictly, but in the sense of being close at hand. .... The casting out of demons in particular implied that Satan's power has been broken, and that the moment for the full manifestation of God's kingdom is near. This is the only sense in which Jesus thinks of the kingdom as present.<sup>2</sup>

God Himself is to establish the kingdom of God, while Jesus is only to proclaim its coming and to gather a group of followers who will fight with Him against the Devil and wait like others for the coming of the kingdom. Jesus does not even know the exact time of the Advent. The purpose of the missionary journeys was not for the extension of the kingdom but only to make known its nearness. However, it was not as near as Jesus thought.

Jesus was later convinced, on account of the hardness-of-heart of the majority and because of the enmity of his opponents, that the kingdom would not come unless He suffered as a ransom for the many. Evidently He cherished the "Messianic functions," for "the Messiahship which He

<sup>1</sup> Later Weiss admitted that in many sayings the Kingdom could not be interpreted in a purely eschatological sense.

<sup>2</sup> Sanday, The Life of Christ in Recent Research, pp. 56-60.



claims is not a present office; its exercise belongs to the future. "On earth He is only a man and prophet." The term "Son of Man" in the passages where it is authentic is a purely eschatological designation of the Messiah, whose coming Jesus was only proclaiming in advance. Again, Johannes Weiss asserts that "the part played by Jesus was not the active rôle of establishing the kingdom, but the passive rôle of waiting for the coming of the kingdom," over which the lordship was designated to Jesus.

There is no permanent ethics in Jesus' teaching. There is only an interim ethics. All that He does, therefore, is to suggest temporary or relative precepts for this transitory existence. He has little or no interest in the present. His vision is fixed upon the hereafter. He did not come to reveal a new ethics of this life, but to proclaim the speedy advent of a new kingdom on earth.

According to Weiss, Jesus believed that at the Advent God will destroy the old world, which is under the control of the Devil, and will create a new world. The final Judgment will take place at that time, including both the living and the dead. Jerusalem will become the center of the kingdom where the nations will be drawn together and will submit themselves to His lordship. This lordship of the Son of Man signifies the beginning of the New Age and the end of the old one. This is why Weiss believed that



the kingdom of God is eschatological and transcendent.<sup>1</sup> Weiss seems to have written forcibly, confidently, and even uncompromisingly. He believes firmly in the eschatological side of the kingdom, but not in the thoroughgoing sense held by Schweitzer. He believes that the teachings of Jesus are "a transcript of apocalyptic thought," but that His life is not to be confirmed by it or to be directed toward it. Here we see the point of departure from Weiss and Schweitzer.

The main features of the Weissian theory, to quote Schweitzer:

[Jesus] does not find the Kingdom:  
He only announces it. He exercises no  
Messianic activity, but He waits with the  
rest of the world, for God to bring in  
the Kingdom of God supernaturally.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Weiss was trying to correct the over-modernized interpretation of the kingdom with his eschatological interpretation. In so doing he caught himself in ancient narrow dogma of Jewish apocalyptic and became as arbitrary and as one-sided as the interpretation which he claimed to have displaced. However, credit must be given to the eschatological interpretation of the kingdom, which has ever since created no small stimulation among the Biblical scholars. The pioneering work of Weiss has certainly led many scholars to commit themselves to a more critical study

<sup>1</sup>

Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 237-240; cf Sanday, op. cit., pp. 56-60.

<sup>2</sup>

Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 236.



of the teachings of Jesus. Schweitzer's estimate of the work of Weiss seems to be justified; "It closes one epoch and begins another."<sup>1</sup> To deny the predominance of eschatology in the teaching of Jesus is impossible, although "Weiss himself has admitted that in many sayings the kingdom cannot be interpreted in a purely eschatological sense."<sup>2</sup> The problem of the relation of the eschatological to the non-eschatological sayings of Jesus has not yet been resolved. Schweitzer, whom Weiss has influenced, endeavors to continue where Weiss stopped, and makes the idea of the kingdom in Jesus' conception a consistent eschatological one.

### Thoroughgoing Eschatology

Regarding the thoroughgoing eschatology, there are two distinct schools of thought: the thoroughgoing transcendence, and the thoroughgoing immanence. Albert Schweitzer represents the former view, while R. Otto represents the latter.

#### (1) Thoroughgoing Transcendent Eschatology

Schweitzer<sup>3</sup> describes his viewpoint as that of thoroughgoing eschatology, meaning by that term not that

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Flew, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," Expository Times, Vol. 46 (1934), p. 214.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Schweitzer, who made the English-speaking world conscious of the problem, was known by all as lecturer, organist,  
[continued]



there was an eschatological element in the teaching of Jesus but that His whole life as recorded in the Gospels--his words, acts, sacraments, death and even resurrection--was all determined by his personal commitment of himself to apocalyptic form of eschatological beliefs, which had its basis on the late Jewish Messianic tradition. "In no way does Jesus attempt to spiritualize it."<sup>1</sup> Therefore the Gospels must be read in the light of that definite anticipation.

Schweitzer's books are stimulating and yet provoking books. His Quest of the Historical Jesus, written in 1906, was translated into English in 1910; and his Mystery of the Kingdom of God, written in 1901, was translated into English in 1914. In these two works he presented his full view of the eschatology of Jesus' teaching regarding the kingdom of God. The writer proposes briefly to sketch as follows Schweitzer's general viewpoint.

Beginning with Mark 9:1, Schweitzer is convinced that for Jesus the kingdom was imminent, catastrophic, and

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medical missionary, philosopher, and theologian. At the age of twenty-four (1899) he published an important work on Kant. Two years later, he published two original works on the life of Christ. In 1903 he gave a revolutionary interpretation of the music of Bach. In 1906 a work in German and French on the art of building and playing the organ appeared. His work on the Quest of the Historical Jesus made quite a sensation all over the world, especially in the English-speaking world,--but not so much in Germany, his own country. Possibly the former was better prepared for it.

<sup>1</sup>

Weigle, Jesus and the Educational Method, p. 22.



possibly nationalistic. It signified the beginning of the new age on earth with the destruction of the old. It was to be brought about as a gift by supernatural power from above in a short time, about the time of the harvest. The idea of the "gradual growth" or the "gradual widening of the circle" is completely foreign to Jesus. The parables of the sower, of the grain of mustard, and of the leaven show the power and the divine secrecy and mystery in which the kingdom works,<sup>1</sup> and do not suggest the evolutionary idea of the kingdom as it was interpreted by the liberal scholars.

The ministry of Jesus is a call for repentance in preparation for the coming of the kingdom. The charge to the Twelve does not mean to find the kingdom but to proclaim its eschatological nearness,—with the intent that all may be warned of the woes which are to precede the coming of the kingdom, as well as the subsequent judgment,—thereby giving all opportunity to prepare that they may enter into the new kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer held that Jesus claimed no ethical nearness of the kingdom at all. Thus the moral teaching of Jesus is regarded as an "interim ethics". It is a special ethic of the interval before the coming of the kingdom.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it serves only for the people of that day who desired

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, The Mystery of the Kingdom, pp. 104, 106 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-93.

<sup>3</sup> Schweizer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 364.



to prepare themselves for the coming kingdom. "There is for Jesus no ethics of the Kingdom of God, for in the kingdom of God all natural relationships are abolished."<sup>1</sup>

The Sermon on the Mount defines the moral disposition with which the chosen ones are predestined to enter. In case of those who are not chosen, the predestination to the kingdom is made manifest by the persecutions.<sup>2</sup> The kingdom cannot be earned; men are called to it, and show themselves to be so called.

The Kingdom itself lies beyond the borders of good and evil; it will be brought about by a cosmic catastrophe through which evil is to be completely overcome. Hence all moral criteria are to be abolished. The Kingdom of God is super-normal. .... Every ethical form of Jesus, be it never so perfect, leads therefore only up to the frontier of the Kingdom of God, while every trace of a path disappears as soon as one advances up the new territory. There one needs it no more.<sup>3</sup>

The whole life of Jesus was determined by an expectation and a secret, according to Schweitzer. By expectation, Jesus believed that the end of the world was at hand and that in its place there would come a supernatural kingdom of God in which the Son of Man would reign. It was for this expectation of the kingdom that Jesus preached

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>3</sup> Schweitzer, Mystery of the Kingdom of God, pp. 101-102.



openly and widely and sent forth His disciples to proclaim it throughout all the places of Israel. Jesus believed that His life and destiny would be revealed to Him; that He, in the cataclysmic overturning of the world's evil, would be the Son of Man coming with power upon the clouds to govern the New Age.

In Schweitzer's opinion, the coming event of the kingdom was to be kept as a secret occasion, for Jesus spoke in parables regarding it, "not to reveal, but to conceal."<sup>1</sup> When He feeds the multitude,

...because he is the future Messiah, this meal becomes without their knowledge the Messianic feast. With the morsel of bread which he gives his disciples to distribute to the people he consecrates them as partakers in the coming Messianic feast, and gives them the guarantee that they, who had shared his table in the time of his obscurity, would also share it in the time of history.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Jesus was granting them salvation by a sacrament, of which they were not conscious of partaking.

There is another secret. That is the secret of Passion. At first Jesus expected the speedy coming of the kingdom even before the Twelve returned from the villages and cities of Israel announcing the approach of the end. Jesus then recognized that there was to be a delay: before

<sup>1</sup> Mark 4:10-12, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 374.



regarded as extreme, illogical and unhistorical. It is extreme, for he tries to force into his eschatological scheme every detail of Jesus' activities, and practically allows no exception. In certain cases he has to change the order of the stories recorded, to satisfy his own eschatological preference, and in other cases he has to discard as unhistorical the various passages which do not easily harmonize with his scheme. It is illogical and unhistorical, for his scheme of eschatological interpretation of the life of Jesus is employed "without discovering the essential 'historical presuppositions', to use Schweitzer's own phrase."<sup>1</sup> The first fallacy in Schweitzer's argument lies in his basic assumption that all of the ideas relative to the coming of the kingdom and its nature were uniform. The eschatological conceptions of Jesus' day allowed for a variety of opinions. These differences of opinions, according to Prof. C. C. McCown,

...are far from proving that Jesus and the majority of Jews in Jesus' day were looking for an otherworldly salvation. The apocalypses, as a rule, are Pharisaic in their religious outlook, with variations as to their legalistic strictness and their particularism. That Jesus would have agreed with the Pharisees in a large proportion of their views need not be denied, for doubtless a large number of them were good, pious Jews. He differed from them in the matter of emphasis on two things: he placed ethical far

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McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 40.



ahead of legal considerations, and he believed enthusiastically in the coming of a new age. He was a thoroughgoing apocalyptic, but that does not mean that he accepted Schweitzer's version of consistent eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the theory of Schweitzer grew up as a reaction to the tendency of modernization of the person of Jesus. He has attempted to get back to the true person of Jesus and to interpret the Man and His teachings in the light of their Palestinian background and Jewish thinking, but according to Prof. Otto--Jewish eschatology was not purely Jewish, nor purely Palestinian. It was really Aryan-Persian and Jewish in combination, which Schweitzer has failed to see.

The second fallacy of Schweitzer's logic is that

...he rests too largely upon deduction from apocalyptic, dogmatic, predestinarian premises which may be questioned, and depends unduly upon a few passages in the text of the Gospels which are of debatable meaning or of doubtful authenticity: Mark 4:10-12, on the use of parables to conceal rather than to reveal; Matthew 10:23, on the coming of the Son of Man before the return of the disciples from their mission to the cities of Israel; Matthew 11:12, on men of violence taking the kingdom of heaven by force; Matthew 16:17, on the keys to the kingdom of heaven; and Matthew 19:28, on the twelve thrones of judgment promised to the twelve disciples.<sup>2</sup>

Schweitzer has rightly been criticized for dealing largely with the subjective side of the life of Jesus, having much to

<sup>1</sup> McCown, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Weigle, op. cit., o. 31.



say about the nature of Jesus' mind--what He thought, how He felt, of what He was conscious, and of what He was unconscious, and so on. This is, of course, chiefly inference.

Schweitzer's third fallacy is that he believed the moral teachings of Jesus to be an interim ethic. If we accept this theory, we become quite involved in real problems. If they were interim ethics, then what value have they for our age? Jesus expected the kingdom to come soon; it has not come. Then Jesus must have been mistaken, and His teachings must have no value for the present. The chief benefits that we can get out of any religion are its religious (spiritual), ethical, and even aesthetical values ("aesthetical" here means a well-balanced sense of life). With these, Schweitzer thinks that Jesus has nothing to offer except for the proclamation of the nearness of the eschatological kingdom, which requires repentance,--that is, according to Schweitzer, a willingness to accept the kingdom.

Schweitzer claims to give, not indeed a life of Jesus, but a picture of Jesus, and a picture which may be regarded as historical, as following faithfully word by word the indications furnished by the Gospels. To the writer, Schweitzer is presenting a very poor picture of Jesus--a picture chiefly colored not by Jesus' own eschatological conception but rather by Schweitzer's eschatological conception of what Jesus should be. He is certainly forming his Jesus out



of his eschatological scheme,--a most abstract apocalyptic figure, who takes no interest in the practical human and historical situation which he is supposed to face. On the other hand, as has been generally recognized, in his endeavor Schweitzer has rendered a great service and stimulation to further the study of the New Testament.

## (2) Thoroughgoing Immanent Eschatology

Between the theories of thoroughgoing transcendence and that of thoroughgoing immanence, there stands a school of thought which gives a bearing to the study of the conception of the thoroughgoing immanence and needs to be mentioned.

To repeat, the students of the eschatological school, such as J. Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, in refuting the liberal theory of Jesus' teaching hold that Jesus was a consistent conformer to Jewish eschatology and that the eschatology of the Gospel was not the product of imagination. Therefore his teaching should be understood purely from the Jewish point of view prevailing at the time of Jesus. In 1910 Dr. E. von Dobschutz published The Eschatology of the Gospels--lectures which he had given in 1908 before the Third International Congress for the History of Religion, held in Oxford, in which he warned against the tendency of taking Jesus' teaching at its face-value; and he drew attention to the fact that certain Gospel documents introduced into Christ's sayings an eschatological meaning where none originally



He as the Son of Man could come from the clouds, He must go there Himself, which involved His death and resurrection. So He set His face toward Jerusalem.

His entry into Jerusalem was Messianic for Jesus, but not Messianic for the people.... He Himself made the preparation for the Messianic entry. He made a point of riding in upon the ass, not because he was weary, but because he desired that the Messianic prophecy of Zech. IX:9 should be secretly fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

The Last Supper at Jerusalem had the same sacramental significance as the gathering at the lake. Jesus was celebrating an eschatological sacrament with his disciples, whom he took as representing the community of the believers in the new kingdom to come.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, according to Schweitzer, Jesus did not die because the people rejected Him or the authorities condemned Him, but because God demanded it. "For Jesus the necessity of his death is grounded in dogma, not in the external historical facts." His one purpose was "to set in motion the eschatological development of history, to let loose the final woes, the confusion and strife, from which shall issue the Parousia, and so to introduce the supramundane phase of the eschatological drama."<sup>3</sup>

Schweitzer is a thoroughgoing eschatologist. Few scholars would defend his full viewpoint, which is generally

<sup>1</sup>

Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 391-2

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., pp. 378 ff.

Schweizer, The Mystery of the Kingdom, pp. 173 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 369, 390.



existed.<sup>1</sup>

Dobschütz maintains that Jesus accepted Jewish ideas as to the end of the age and the coming of the kingdom, and that He reinterpreted them, putting a full meaning into them and making them into a new faith. The forms of Jewish thinking remain, but the content is essentially new.<sup>2</sup> Christianity is different from Judaism, because

Christianity is a religion of faith, the gospel giving not only guarantees for the future life in another world, but bringing by itself confidence, peace, joy, salvation, forgiveness, righteousness--whatever man's heart yearns after.<sup>3</sup>

If there was nothing in Jesus but eschatology, then He was a misguided enthusiast, and it would be almost impossible to explain how the name of an eccentric became the symbol for millions and millions of Christians who took from Him not only some vain hopes of the future, but a joyful experience of real salvation and an unexampled amount of energy.<sup>4</sup>

This is one side of the picture as to why Dobschütz has characterized Jesus' belief as "transmuted eschatology." To put it briefly, eschatology transmuted in this sense means that what is expected as an external change is taken inwardly, before the external sense is to be revealed. "It is to be

<sup>1</sup> Dobschütz, The Eschatology of the Gospels, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> McCown, Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Dobschütz, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 59.



an experience of man's heart."<sup>1</sup> (Luke XVII:21) Again, eschatology transmuted means that what is spoken of in Jewish eschatology as to come in the last days is interpreted as already at hand in the lifetime of Jesus. "The kingdom come" means the kingdom is present; "Jesus' casting out of devils proves that the powers of the kingdom are already at work."<sup>2</sup>

To summarize: Jesus is said to preach a transmuted eschatology. The divine reign was not absolutely in the future and otherworldly, but in some true sense already present on this earth. The kingdom of God is not awaited as a purely external catastrophe, but is taking place already inwardly. Instead of giving up the Jewish forms of thinking concerning the end of the age, Jesus used "the language of apocalypticism" to lay a new faith in the minds of his people.<sup>3</sup>

Otto, whose eschatological conception--the thorough-going immanence--is going to be examined, agrees in many points with the transmuted eschatology of von Dobschütz, but is greatly opposed to Schweitzer.

Like Schweitzer, Otto stands for a consistent eschatology, but unlike him, he contends that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as mysterion, a mirum, a sphere of salvation, a power that has already broken through into the present order by the presence of Jesus. Otto is somewhat in harmony with von Dobschütz on this point. A brief sketch will now be given of the main outlines of Otto's thought, together

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<sup>1</sup>Dobschütz, op. cit., pp. 135, 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 150.



with a statement of its implications.

Otto sees in Jesus one who was an "eschatological itinerant preacher." He was a Jew, but did not belong to the official Judaism of His time. The late Jewish Apocalyptic was not purely Jewish in origin. It owed much to the Chaldean-Iranian tradition, and originally goes back to primitive Aryan and Persian sources--to the time before Indians and Iranians had separated. Before the kingdom had become a definite doctrinal term in Israel, it was already in use among Aryan priests. It was through Eastern influence that the kingdom of God first became a truly eschatological term, and the historical background of Jesus' conception of his teaching cannot be confined to a strictly Jewish line of development.<sup>1</sup>

In Otto's opinion, this Galilean preacher of eschatology was "the holy man," or "the holy one of God," a charismatic personality.

The charismatic has a capacity for spiritual and psychic experiences of a distinctive kind. He has heightened talents, such as guidance and discernment, and psychic powers upon other souls which surpass normal limits, although they root in the general mystery of personality. This perception is applied in detail to the miracles reported in the Gospels, accounts of perception of men's thoughts, and prophetic prediction.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, pp. 20 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Filson and Woolf, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," Christendom, Vol. III (Autumn, 1938), p. 617.



As a charismatic person, He was endowed with all the divine qualities which would fit Him for the life and work to which He was called. He became a conscious bearer of the divine spirit, and an integral part of the inbreaking miracle of the eschatological order itself.

"The Kingdom of God and the Charisma" is intended to express the essential connection between the self-consistent person and the message of Christ. They are two things of the same aspect. The kingdom of God, as already at hand, is dynamis, the inbreaking miraculous of the transcendental. As such, it is operative in the exorcistic dynamis of its messenger, and equally in the exousia and the charis of his preaching.<sup>1</sup>

The question is put as to the difference between Paul as a charisma or the so-called charismatic persons of the Hebrew, and Jesus as a charismatic. To this, Rudolph Otto answers that:

...with Christ the traits are not the qualities of a mere charismatic, not the powers of a mere miracle-working rabbi, nor again the equipment of a mere prophet; in Jesus they are the operations of the power of the dawning kingdom of God itself: "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you."<sup>2</sup>

According to Otto, there are three "aeons":<sup>3</sup>

- (1) the prophets and John; (2) the present time, in which the kingdom has already dawned as a saving power; and (3)

<sup>1</sup>

Otto, op. cit., pp. 334 ff.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>3</sup>

McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 40.



the future when it will come in power.

In the first "aeon", Jesus is different from His predecessors, and especially from John the Baptist, whom He succeeded. Otto believes that Jesus decidedly broke with John the Baptist, who proclaimed, "The judgment of wrath is coming; repent." Jesus preached, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news."

...Instead of the Day of Yahweh, Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of heaven. He adopted John's message but transformed it. So also Jesus accepted the current view of the Kingdom as coming in the future after the "messianic woes and divine judgment, but it was already present and working in its miraculous power....<sup>1</sup>

In the second "aeon", what distinguishes Otto's position is his emphasis on the presence of the eschatological marvel within the ministry of Jesus.

It was not Jesus who brought the kingdom; the kingdom brought Him. His [Jesus'] own appearance was actually only a result of the fact that the kingdom had already come, that the powers of this kingdom were working in him and through him.... He himself was part and parcel of this inbreaking entity of the kingdom, which was superior even to him.

The casting out of the Satan from heaven witnessed by Jesus indicates the actual beginning of the triumph of the divine power over Satan. "The kingdom comes chiefly not as claim and decision but as a saving dynamis and redeeming power, to

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<sup>1</sup>

McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 42; cf. Otto, op. cit., pp. 67, 69 ff.



set free a world lying in the clutches of Satan, threatened by the devil and by demons...."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the present kingdom was a matter of growth in the sense that "it came independently of the doing, the willing, causing, or working, indeed even of the knowledge and observation of man."<sup>2</sup> It did not grow in the sense that man could work for its coming. Thus it is opposed to any righteousness through human works. The kingdom, according to Otto, is a pure miracle endowed with germinating power which works quietly, secretly, in its own way, and by its own power. It comes, as the parable states, "he knows not how".

...It was originally in heaven and it is now on earth;...breaking in,...imperceptibly spreading;...miraculously encompassing,...inwardly and outwardly extending its realm of power. It is "logically eschatological," not from the standpoint of our "logical eschatologists," but from that of the miracle of the kingdom of God.

...For whether future or present, whether transcendent or immanent, the chief thing is that the kingdom of heaven is the pure mirum, the purely miraculous thing (Wunderding), mysterion, says Christ.... Ordinary things can exist only either in the past or the present. Purely future things cannot come out of their future to work in the present. Wunderding can do both.<sup>3</sup>

Otto considers the kingdom, in a certain respect, immanent rather than transcendent. He takes care to regard the present as immanent in a real sense.

<sup>1</sup> Otto, op. cit., pp. 103-105.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 117-118.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 72, 118-119, 131-137.



The kingdom would be immanent if it were involved in the things of this world or in souls and grew out of them as their creation....

For Jesus, the kingdom was always purely and wholly transcendent and only fully so, when it descended with its dynamis, broke into the world sphere, and thus was in the midst of you.

Otto avoids considering the translation of Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you;" neither will he take it as referring to the future in the sense of "the kingdom of God will [suddenly] be in your midst." For those who have eyes to see, it is already in their midst. That which is hidden and bound to be revealed (Mark 4:22) is the kingdom which will come into power and is present in secret.<sup>1</sup>

In the third "aeon," according to Otto, the kingdom of God that Jesus conceived was, in strictly eschatological terms, the future kingdom at the end of time, which would follow the Messianic woes and the divine judgment, but His eschatology was new in two respects: firstly, He Himself lived in the already present and active wonder of the end of time, and knew that its powers were already operative in Himself as the beginning; and, secondly, by His deeds, speech, and charismatic use of power, He enabled His followers to have contact with the Wonder of the Transcendent.<sup>2</sup> Prof.

<sup>1</sup>

Otto, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>

Cave, book review of Dodd, The Kingdom of God and the Son of God, in The Congregational Quarterly, Vol. XII, No. 4 (Oct. 1934), p. 354; cf. Otto, op. cit., p. 155.



McCown has rightly described Otto's sense of the future kingdom as "the future when it will come in power." As Otto himself in his introduction to his book says, "Jesus' message of the kingdom did not fall from heaven as a completely new thing, but had long been prepared for."<sup>1</sup>

Otto connects the idea of the Son of Man and the conviction that He must suffer with Enoch and associates it with Isaiah 53. Otto believes that the idea (the Son of Man in Enoch) was formed before Jesus;

...that a powerful preacher alike of righteousness, the coming judgment, the blessed new age, a prophet of the eschatological Son of Man, would be transported at the end of his earthly life to God; that he would become the one whom he had proclaimed.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus took the idea of "the Son of Man" and fulfilled it in Himself. The idea that the Son of Man must suffer was considered as a new dogma--"the dogma of a Messiah who must suffer."<sup>3</sup> In other words, "suffering was a part and parcel of His Messianic calling,..the Messianic saving work committed to Him."

With the Enochic picture of the Son of Man Jesus combined, according to Otto, the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah. It was not that Jesus must suffer, but the Son of Man must suffer in order that the long-waited salvation might come.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Otto, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 44.



Why, then, should the Son of Man suffer?

...Otto explains out of a complex of sacrificial ideas that have to do with the suffering of the righteous for Israel, with the "covering" of sins, with kofer and lytron, with expiation ideas and similar quite irrational notions, which have been falsely rationalized into the idea of forgiveness and justification.<sup>1</sup>

The suffering of the Son of Man was a redemptive suffering.

The saving of the lost for the eschatological order was, as such, and as a whole, the meaning of his person and message. .... By the humble and voluntary surrender of life on the part of the Son of Man, the many would gain what the disciples of the Servant of God gained by the suffering of their master, namely, the possibility of entering as reconciled individuals into a birth of God.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Otto takes the Last Supper to mean "the consecration of the disciples for entrance into the kingdom of God." He sees in Jesus' act something in "strictly eschatological relation to the inheritance of the kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup>

The idea of eating holy food was a later importation into the rite. The sense of "mystical unity" took the place of "eschatological unity." The idea of the mass, the repetition of the crucifixion, was much later. The meal originally was a promise that they should eat and drink together in the coming kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," The Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Otto, op. cit., pp. 246-248, 260.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 311; cf. Cave, op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>4</sup> McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," The Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 44.



This rite has also been understood to imply "the forgiveness of sins",--not the forgiveness of sins as the end in itself, according to Otto, but rather in the sense of the sharing of the consecration and expiation through the suffering of the Servant of God, for in Christ's teaching it was not an end but rather a means to the eschatological end. "It was the means whereby men might enter into God's kingdom, whereby sinners, when redeemed, might be able to see God."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, what should be the condition for one to enter the kingdom of God, one might ask? To this Otto answers that

The kingdom does not demand "decision" (Entscheidung), but repentance. It is not an allegory for a "radical demand", but an actual goal to which man should come and which should come to him.... The command to love God above all things and one's neighbor as one's self is not valid because "the kingdom is coming;" of itself it puts man "in the situation" of needing repentance and its emphasis cannot be in the least increased through the eschatological situation.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, I should say that one of Otto's chief contributions to the study of the conception of the kingdom of God is his discovery that Jewish eschatology was not purely Jewish, nor purely Palestinian, but rather Aryan and Persian in its origin. Few books have traced the conception of the kingdom to its earliest sources. "He gives

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<sup>1</sup> Otto, op. cit., p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 39.



much more weight to the extra-canonical sources, especially the non-Jewish than to the discussions about canonical materials." Possibly this is one of the reasons why his book gives us a sense of freshness. This is Otto's strongest point, especially when he is compared with Schweitzer, who has not been able to command the use of sources outside the canonical materials. On the contrary, Otto is weak in one direction in which Schweitzer is strong,—that is, Otto does not show his familiarity with the literature of New Testament criticism as does Schweitzer, and he refers only rarely to well-known writers. As Prof. McCown says: "Otto is, of course, sufficiently at home with the principles of New Testament criticism to speak the language without stammering. Yet in a sense he speaks from outside."<sup>1</sup>

The other important contribution that Otto makes is his emphasis on the spiritual element in Jesus' conception. The kingdom of God is for Jesus essentially supernatural; it is not a state, nor a place, but a spiritual power which Jesus expected to work on earth as it was already working.

The influence of Otto's theory cannot be ignored. We can see in Prof. C. H. Dodd's book, The Parables of the Kingdom, which is to be examined in the following section, how Otto has made his influence felt.

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<sup>1</sup> McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," The Journal of Religion, Vol. XVI (Jan. 1936), p. 40.



## Realized Eschatology

A new interpretation of Jesus' message of the kingdom of God as "realized eschatology," given by Prof. C. H. Dodd,<sup>1</sup> has attracted attention of biblical scholars in every land. In 1935, under the auspices of the University of London, Dodd gave in defense of his theory three lectures, now contained in The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development, and in the following year he wrote, in more detail, The Parables of the Kingdom. The latter book "is not so much an exposition of the parables as a defense of the theory of 'realized eschatology' through an attempt to interpret them in a way that is compatible with his theory."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the important positions that Dodd holds are as follows:

### (1) Regarding the Problem of Content

Our gospels are primary sources for the Church at the time when they were written, rather than for the life-time of Jesus. The early Church was concerned with passing on the teaching of Jesus in the form of moral instruction or exhortation, rather than with the kerygma which carries with it the implication of "good tidings" proclaimed in an eschatological setting. The preaching, according to Dodd, is the actual and

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University, the only Protestant liberal biblical scholar to be honored at the Harvard Tercentenary. Craig, "Realized Eschatology," Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 56 (1937-38), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



traditional content of the Gospel preached by the Apostles, not by Paul alone but by the primitive Apostles, such as Peter, James and John. What, then, is the actual content of the Gospel which the earliest Apostles preached? Prof. Dodd has defined it as an emphasis upon the present as "the age to come," made possible by the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. By virtue of the Resurrection, it is proclaimed, Jesus has been exalted as the Messianic head of the New Israel; the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory; and the Messianic Age will come shortly to its consummation in the return of Christ. This is the kerygma, which always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation or "life in the Age to come" to those who enter the elect community.<sup>1</sup>

Although the above theory seems to be Pauline, Dodd attempts to prove that Paul had received it as tradition from the "Jerusalem kerygma," for in Gal. 2:2 Paul says that Peter, James and John gave their approval of the gospel which he preached before them at Jerusalem, and Paul also declared expressively that this summary of the gospel is what he had received as tradition.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development, pp. 38-43.<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.



Moreover, in the opening verses of the Epistle to the Romans (1:1-4), Paul considered "the good news of God" as recognized by his readers. He speaks of God's good news which He announced beforehand through His prophets in Holy Scripture. This gospel concerned "His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh; who was appointed Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness from the time of the resurrection of the dead--Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the main feature of Paul's message might also have been the common message of other primitive apostles. According to Dodd, this kerygma may be taken to mean the preaching of the kingdom of God.

It is very significant that it follows the lines of the summary of the preaching of Jesus as given in Mark 1:14-15; "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe the Gospel." This summary provides the framework within which the Jerusalem kerygma is set.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Prof. Dodd maintains that

...the kerygma is primary, and it acted as a preservation of the tradition which conveyed the facts. The nearer we are in the Gospels to the stuff of the kerygma, the nearer we are to the fountain-head of the tradition. There never existed a tradition formed by a dry historical interest in the facts as facts. From the beginning the facts were preserved

<sup>1</sup> Dodd, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 45.



in the memory and tradition as elements in the Gospel which the Church proclaimed. This, no doubt, means that we cannot expect to find in the Gospels bare matter of fact, unaffected by the interpretation borne by the facts in the kerygma.<sup>1</sup>

By knowing the kerygma, we know two things: first, the influence of the existing beliefs on the form of the individual sayings of Jesus; second, the meaning of his original sayings in the light of those traditional beliefs.

Another problem in relation to the use of the material in the Gospel is the question of the parables employed by Jesus:

Dodd does not suppose that the parables which we read set forth the ideas which he ascribes to Jesus. Parables which were originally spoken in criticism of the Jews have been given in general application.... What Jesus said must be reconstructed by historical criticism.<sup>2</sup>

The allegorical treatment of the parables, as well as the modern homiletical elaboration of them, should be avoided. These parables were not generalizing truths but illustrations of some definite contemporary subject.<sup>3</sup> Prof. Dodd seeks, for this reason, to restore those parables to their original context and to the subjects that Jesus would have wished to illustrate.

<sup>1</sup> Dodd, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Craig, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, pp. 11-33, 132.



(2) Regarding Jesus' Conception  
of the Kingdom of God

For Dodd, Jesus' message was eschatological but already fulfilled or realized. In proclaiming the coming of the kingdom, Jesus did not have anything in mind which was akin to our evolutionary conception of progress, nor akin to a catastrophic event in the near future. Dodd completely repudiates the Ritschlian conception of the kingdom. He holds that the kingdom is not something that could be brought about by human effort. Such a conception, according to Dodd, is a conjecture, with no historical foundation. For Jesus, the kingdom of God was a present crisis, a present fact; "the eschaton has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation to that of realized experience." It was unlike Judaism, which looked forward to the coming of the kingdom, although the later Christianity cherished the faith of Judaism in this respect. "Few predictions of its coming may be attributed to Jesus;" and according to Dodd, they "have no historical perspective."<sup>1</sup> He would attribute those passages which have a perspective of future, such as the many parables of the return of an absent master, to the later Church point of view, in which the return of Jesus was expected.

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<sup>1</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 108.



...His attitude is rather one of fulfilled apocalyptic. The same is true of another eschatological term, the "Son of Man." By appropriating this to Himself Jesus makes it not future but present.<sup>1</sup>

According to Dodd, the passage in Mark 1:15 does not mean "The kingdom of God is at hand," but rather "The kingdom of God has come."<sup>2</sup> In order to reinforce his theory, Dodd uses the following passages: "Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." "The hour comes and now is." "Take no thought for the morrow." Now is the aspect of time.<sup>3</sup> Again, "Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears; blessed are your eyes, for they see; for many prophets and kings desired to see the things you see and saw them not." The Messianic banquet is spread for those who accept the invitation; "Come for all things are now ready."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus believed that the power of the kingdom of God was already in function, and it was manifest in his own ministry. That is, in the authority with which He speaks and in the power with which He acts, the kingdom of God is revealed. "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you."<sup>5</sup> In other words, the

<sup>1</sup> Cadbury, a book review on Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, Journal of Biblical Literature, Vols. 54-55 (1935-36), pp. 242-4.

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 177; cf. 2 Cor. 6:2, Heb. 3:13-15.

<sup>4</sup> Dodd, The Kingdom of God and History, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 35.



effective conflict with evil on the part of the divine power indicates the presence of the sovereignty of God. There is another way in which the presence of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus can be conceived. That is, to quote Jesus' own answer to John: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Finally, Jesus' work of healing is presented by the Fourth Evangelist as a sign of the coming of eternal life to men, for external life is the ultimate result of the coming of the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

The kingdom of God is not something yet to come. Neither will it shortly come as a catastrophic or momentary event. But it already came with Jesus, and its coming was manifested in the series of historical events and was perceived to be eternal in its quality. "That eternal quality is manifested in time by the continuous life of the Church, centered in the sacrament in which the crisis of the death and resurrection of Christ is perpetually made present,"<sup>2</sup> and the coming of the kingdom is celebrated. As a matter of fact, Dodd denies that Jesus held to a future consummation of the kingdom within or to a closing of the historical process.

<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 50.<sup>2</sup>Dodd, The Kingdom of God and History, p. 37.



He pictures Jesus as believing that His own coming presented a historical crisis which would move rapidly toward events of serious moment. According to Dodd, Jesus had no eschatology of bliss in the form of a restored kingdom, nor did He think of a cataclysm bringing this age to a close to be followed by another. When Jesus commissioned his disciples to carry His message through the towns and villages of Palestine, He gave them, so far as our records tell, no program nor body of teaching to propagate. All they were to do was to heal the sick, to cast out demons, and to say, "The Kingdom is at hand." It was not a program for human action, but the proclamation of an act of God.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' ethical teaching is no system of general casuistry, nor yet an "interim-ethic" for a brief and special period in human history, nor an ethic for those who expect the speedy end of the world. But it is for those who have experienced the end of this world and the coming of the kingdom of God. It is the absolute ethic of the kingdom of God, the moral principles of a new order of life.... The implied major premise of all His ethical sayings is the affirmation, "The Kingdom of God has come upon you, therefore love your enemies that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven." .... "The Kingdom of God has come upon you, therefore take no thought for your life, but seek first His Kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Dodd thinks that the teaching of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, has reference to the future

<sup>1</sup> Dodd, History and the Gospel, pp. 123-125.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 125; cf. Luke X:9, XI:21, Matt. V:44-45, Matt. VII: 1-2.



as well as to the present. He ascribes the predictive element that we find in the Gospels to "a reflection of the experience of the early Church within which the tradition was formed." Besides, Prof. Dodd argues from the fact that Jesus was widely regarded as a prophet and that prediction was a part of the traditional rôle of a prophet. But "there seem to be traces of predictions attributed to Him which were not fulfilled, and therefore cannot be regarded as vaticinia ex eventu. In spite of this, Prof. Dodd concludes that it is probable that Jesus did on occasion utter predictions.<sup>1</sup> So also Prof. Dodd deals with the problem of the end of time. "Dodd admits in places that literally the evidence points to an end which will bring the historical process to a conclusion. But he insists upon a symbolical interpretation of these passages in terms of the eternal world beyond space and time."<sup>2</sup>

After an examination of the positions of both Otto and Dodd, one is surprised to find that they have more points in disagreement than in agreement. To be specific: Firstly, Otto describes Jesus as a "Galilean preacher of eschatology" who was endowed with a charismatic personality,

<sup>1</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Craig, op. cit., p. 21; cf. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 102.



and who became an integral part of the inbreaking miracle of the eschatological order itself. He was instrumental to the coming of the kingdom, for, as Otto says, "Jesus did not bring the kingdom, but rather the kingdom brought Him." But Dodd seems to have represented Jesus not only as an announcer of "the act of God," but rather as an active participant Himself in the realization of the eschatological kingdom on this earth. To quote him:

The teaching of Jesus is not the leisurely and patient exposition of a system by the founder of a school. It is related to a brief and tremendous crisis in which He is the principal figure and which indeed His appearance brought about.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the coming of the kingdom is a crisis brought about by His appearance.

Secondly, Otto derives the "eschatological" idea of the kingdom of God from primitive Aryan, while Dodd believes that it arises from the primitive Hebrew conceptions, for the idea of God as king, or of "kingly rule," was characteristic of Semitic religion. In Aryan tradition the "kingdom" often means "kingdom" in its strict sense, though it may mean "kingly rule."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 25. I am not sure if I made the point mentioned above convincing enough. At times I cannot see that there is much distinction between Otto's and Dodd's conception regarding Jesus as a person.

<sup>2</sup>

Loc. cit.



Thirdly, Otto holds that, for Jesus, the kingdom of God was always the future kingdom of the new age, which was to be followed by the Messianic woes and divine judgment, while Dodd, on the contrary, maintains that the New Age has come and that Jesus takes upon Himself the "eschatological" rôle of the Son of Man. The judgment and bliss that are eschatological in character have come into human experience. They also have their corresponding reality within history.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, for Otto, the kingdom of God cannot take place by decision on the part of men, for it is a pure miracle from heaven. Being a pure miracle, "it transforms what is earthly." Therefore its coming depends purely on the divine action, not on the human effort. Dodd, on the other hand, seems to have considered the decision on the part of men as a necessary step for the acquisition of the blessing of the kingdom. "The kingdom of God is within you." The treasure is within one's reach.

The course of events in which the kingdom of God comes upon men "Tends to one moment's product, thus when a soul declares itself, to wit, by its fruit, the thing it does."<sup>2</sup>

...The response of men to the challenge of such a situation [the development of events] helps to determine a further situation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford, The Kingdom of God and History, p. 36.



Fifthly, like Otto, Dodd stands enthusiastically for the presence of the eschatological kingdom, its power and activity, within the ministry of Jesus; but unlike Otto he tries to remove all the futuristic element from the teaching of Jesus by accusing the early Church of intruding its apocalyptic traditions.

Lastly, Dodd is weak in his contention, which depends "upon forced and unnatural interpretations of the key <sup>1</sup>verses."<sup>2</sup> His own admission of the fact is sufficient to prove it. He seems to have interpreted the rest of the Gospel material in terms of his theory, which leads to an ultimate skepticism regarding our Gospel sources.<sup>2</sup> However, Otto gains a certain degree of strength by offering an historical basis for the understanding of the issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Craig, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 22.



CHAPTER IV  
SOCIAL INTERPRETATIONS



## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIAL INTERPRETATIONS

The social interpretation of Jesus' teaching which was first brought into prominence by Adolf Harnack in Germany, and was subsequently advanced by Walter Rauschenbusch in America in the late nineteenth century, was attacked and given a heavy blow by the eschatological school of thought, of which Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer were the leading exponents. Weiss and Schweitzer, whose positions have been discussed in the previous section, emphatically proclaimed that Jesus was anything but a social reformer,--that he was not even a teacher of ethics. The writer will now undertake to give a review of some of the social views held by important scholars.

#### Harnack

Adolf Harnack has been presented at length previously as a Ritschlian-inspired believer in the spiritual interpretation of Jesus' religion,--that is, an interpretation of religion as a matter of individual relation between God and man, and between man and man. Harnack was an effective



advocate of the social gospel of Jesus. Prof. McCown has rightly pointed out that, for Harnack, religion was deeply spiritual and broadly social. Harnack found in the message of Jesus "a basis for practical social activity, not mere charity, not the 'inner mission' only, but the reform of society to conform with the dictates of brotherly love."

The words, "My kingdom is not of this world,"

...not only exclude such a political theocracy as the Pope aims at setting up,...negatively they forbid all direct and formal interference of religion in worldly affairs. .... Let us fight, let us struggle, let us get justice for the oppressed, let us order the circumstances of the world as with a clear conscience we can, and as we may think best for our neighbor; but do not let us expect the gospel to afford us any direct help. In other words, the gospel provides no detailed schemes of reform. To be a Christian, one should not merely seek to fulfill his own calling as a Christian as Ritschl maintained, but to realize in society the higher righteousness under the commandment of love.<sup>1</sup>

Harnack's own activities, as president of the Evangelical-Social Congress, in attempting to lessen conflict and to improve social conditions, as well as his interest in proclaiming peace and creating a Christian community of nations, prove how earnestly he took his own responsibility in social matters.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

McCown, Lecture Notes, Course on Social Christianity in America, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Calif. [hereafter cited as McCown, Lecture Notes]; cf. Harnack, What Is Christianity, p. 124 f.

<sup>2</sup>

McCown, Lecture Notes.



## Rauschenbusch

The interest in the field of the social gospel was greatly increased about 1908 by the contributions of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), Professor of Church History in Rochester Theological Seminary, whose Christianity and the Social Crisis appeared in 1907 and was reprinted twice that year and three times the next year. In 1912 Rauschenbusch popularized a vivid phrase in the title of his book, Christianizing the Social Order, based on lectures delivered in 1910 and 1911 on the Earl Foundation of the Pacific School of Religion and on the Merrick Foundation of Ohio Wesleyan University.<sup>1</sup> His Theology for the Social Gospel appeared in 1917; in this book he described the kingdom of God as:

...the Christian transfiguration of the social order...the supreme end of God, the purpose for which the Church exists.... The social gospel is concerned about a progressive social incarnation of God,...a progressive reign of love in human affairs.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of a community of righteousness in mankind is just as much a saving act of God as the salvation of an individual from his natural selfishness and moral inability.<sup>3</sup>

The above cited examples are just a few of many discussions of the social teachings of Jesus. The school

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<sup>1</sup> McCown, Lecture Notes.

<sup>2</sup> Rauschenbush, Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 142, 143, 145, 148.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 139.



of thoroughgoing eschatologists alleged that Jesus had no social message. Therefore, the question as to whether there is a social gospel should be raised. Did Jesus propose to save society as well as the individual? Both Harnack and Rauschenbusch have been criticized for being rational and untrue to historical fact in their presentations. They seem to have created the teachings of Jesus out of their conjecture, not out of Jesus' life and teachings.

#### McCown

In answer to the issue in question, I refer to McCown's The Genesis of the Social Gospel, in which the author went back as far as written records could carry him, through three thousand years of pre-Christian history, to see if he could find a basis for the genesis of the social gospel. He made a very interesting discovery:

...throughout those three thousand years, not only among the Jews, but among the Syrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians as well, there is recurring evidence, clear and explicit, to show that the "social question," the problem of poverty and wealth, of exploitation and oppression, had always been present, and likewise there had always been a belief that a divine reign of justice would some day reverse conditions and revolutionize society. The faith came to expression above all in the Jewish apocalypses.<sup>1</sup>

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McCown, Lecture Notes.



In his article, "The Truth about the Bible," McCown confidently declares that the question of the coming of the kingdom is at bottom a social problem, not a question of individual religion.<sup>1</sup>

If...Jesus used the idea and language of these documents, as practically all scholars now admit, what he said about the reign of God must have meant that he looked upon poverty and oppression as the Old Testament and apocalyptic writers did. Whatever moral insight Jesus had, whatever keenness of spiritual vision, ranges him on the side, not of pride and power, but of lowliness and weakness; not on the side of wealth and luxury, but on the side of want and poverty. The kingdom of God meant not merely an internal state of moral goodness and spiritual happiness but a society ruled by the divine will. Jesus' proclamation of the imminence of the kingdom makes the Beatitudes, not a paean in praise of meekness, poverty, and weakness, but an anticipatory shout of victory over the impending overthrow of evil, the redress of injustice, and the banishment of oppression.<sup>2</sup>

...religion and morality are indissolubly connected and morality cannot escape responsibility for social conditions. No true worshipper of a loving heavenly Father can avoid duties to his neighbors, and these, according to the teachings of Jesus, include some responsibility for his physical condition and not merely for heavenly salvation. So long as Jesus is regarded as the author of the parable of the Good Samaritan and Matthean picture of the final judgment, he must be supposed to have had some program for ministering to human need.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> McCown, "The Truth about the Bible," The Institute, Vol. VII (April 1923).

<sup>2</sup> McCown, Lecture Notes.

<sup>3</sup> McCown, The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 369.



So far as positive interpretation can be gathered from the internal evidence, I should say the whole analysis of Prof. McCown points to the fact that Jesus had a social message. In A. B. Bruce's words: "Can Jesus have no message for these nine-tenths" who are poor? Prof. McCown tackled this issue, not so much from the standpoint of the interpretation and analysis of the New Testament text, but rather from that of a religio-historical and social as well as economical analysis and interpretation. Personally, it seems to the writer that Jesus did not make any positive statement regarding the belief that men must be co-workers with God in establishing His kingdom. Jesus seems also to have believed that no human efforts in this world can hasten or retard the realization of the coming of the kingdom,-- which, to Him, lies in the hand of God. Therefore, it is extremely doubtful if He identified the kingdom with a new social order to be built in this world. Possibly His immediate intention in dealing with the social issue of His day was to draw His people's attention from things material to things spiritual, whereby a tentative solution could be sought. Furthermore, if Jesus had a social message and some program for ministering to human need, according to Prof. McCown, his message and program would not fit the changing need and complicated demands of society, for Jesus lived in an age which was different from ours. However, we all



believe that Jesus had a passionate concern for the social condition of His time.

One of the chief contributions of Prof. McCown's work is to prove that Jesus had a social message for us. He proves it by presenting the chief factors that entered into the historical development of the numerous ideals of social justice current in Jesus' day and their bearing on Jesus' teachings.

In his earlier book, The Promise of His Coming, Prof. McCown argues:

Jesus did not look at the world through the eyes of the apocalyptic,...for the apocalyptic world view was pessimistic, deterministic, mechanical, external, and literalistic,...Jesus was none of these. He may occasionally seem to despair of a "disloyal and sinful generation," and he knows that opposition, hardship, suffering await both Master and disciples. But his world is not evil and growing worse. It is ruled by a loving Heavenly Father who clothes the lily and "is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil." Jesus was not an ascetic, matter was not evil to him.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was an activist; He looked to do something to change the course of events. For Him,

...righteousness was not something that could be imposed from without. Rather it could be developed only from within, by human participation in God's purpose to labors. We need not be able to claim the support of the saying, "Lo, the kingdom of God is within you" because

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<sup>1</sup> McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 146.



of uncertainty as to translation, but that the kingdom was for Jesus primarily a matter of the heart needs no proof.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus believed in the coming of the reign of God, but its coming, according to Prof. McCown, is by way of the cross, by the method of suffering and of service.

Jesus was willing to make the supreme sacrifice in order that God might reign in the hearts of men.<sup>2</sup>

If all who wished to enter the kingdom must suffer, he who was supremely instructed with the task of bringing it in must pour out his soul unto death. .... Jesus could not sit down and wait for a far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves with ordered, unhurried evolution. The kingdom of God must come by conflict. It is not true that it can come easily, by a gradual growth, or by the faithful keeping of God's laws. Men cannot sleep and rise night and day, while it grows like the grain. It will continue to grow no matter what this or that man does, for God's purposes are sure, and some day righteousness will triumph. But there must be many a conflict with the powers of evil, many a crisis, many a catastrophe to help it on its march.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, Prof. McCown thinks there was full justification for the element of the catastrophic which Jesus introduced into his conception of the kingdom.

Like Dobschütz, Prof. McCown believes that Jesus must have preached a "transmuted eschatology." That is, the

<sup>1</sup> McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 151-152.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 165-165.



great change is not awaited as a purely external catastrophe, but is already taking place on this earth, inwardly.

...He seems to have adopted the social idealism, the stern morality, and the religious fervor of the prophets and in that spirit to have used the language of apocalypticism.<sup>1</sup>

...He signified himself entirely out of sympathy with apocalyptic spirit....it [apocalypticism] knew nothing of the coming of God to the world by way of the cross. The ideal of the "suffering servant" more than anything else in the teaching of Jesus presents an element that is entirely irreconcilable with the apocalyptic conception of God's relation to mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Christianity could hardly have grown as it did if it had been able to offer nothing more than a promise of heavenly bliss to satisfy the ineradicable demand for justice which perennially blossoms in the human heart. It is as champion of justice that Jesus holds a place in the homage of the modern world.<sup>3</sup>

[We should] interpret Jesus as a part of civilization...his conception of the reign of God, in other words his social ideal is to be understood out of his Messianic, or the apocalyptic, hopes of his people.... Furthermore he is to be understood in the light of the social ideals of the ancient Orient, and not in the light of Hellenistic Christianity as it developed out of the work of Paul and his fellows; a considerable number of current conceptions of Jesus are at once revealed as mistaken.<sup>4</sup>

Very often the believers of the social gospel, with a passion for social justice and reform, fail to know

<sup>1</sup> McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> McCown, The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 366.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 364, 366.



the strength that supports it. In this regard, Prof. McCown says: "The kingdom was to be spiritual before it could be social, an internal power before it could bear external fruit."<sup>1</sup>

### Niebuhr

Niebuhr seldom expounds directly the meaning of the kingdom of God except in a derivative way. That is, he speaks of the kingdom in terms of absolute ethics. He seems to belong to no one school of thought. His own work has been that of "the arresting critic of Christian social strategy rather than that of the systematic theological thinker."<sup>2</sup> He gives no systematic theology, for whatever fragments of theology we can gather here and there from him are by-products of and subordinate to his interest in social problems and his desire for a social change. If Niebuhr can be said to hold any position at all, it would probably be a kind of prophetic realism. His thought as a whole is based on the prophetic element in the Hebrew-Christian tradition. It has been said that his prophetic realism is quite obviously the ethical counterpart of the Barthian reaction.

...But Barth's theological apocalyptic tends to become socially quietistic, while Niebuhr's ethical apocalyptic is socially evolutionary,

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<sup>1</sup> McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Aubrey, Present Theological Tendencies, p. 103.



as well as fiercely polemical against an idealism based on illusion, and against rationalism and naturalism in all their forms.<sup>1</sup>

Niebuhr refuses to follow orthodox Christianity "in its premature identification of the transcendent will of God with the canonical codes" or with Marxism in its apocalyptic Utopianism. Both liberalism and Marxism are secularized and naturalized versions of the Hebrew prophetic movement and the Christian religion. His aim is to steer a middle course between the idealistic dualisms and naturalistic monisms, and to maintain the tension between the transcendent and the historical, which alone makes a religion ethically fruitful.<sup>2</sup>

The basis of Niebuhr's absolute ethic is rooted primarily in the prophetic spirit rather than in any interpretation of Jesus' teachings. In An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, he asserts that "the ethic of Jesus is the perfect fruit of prophetic religion," and that it follows logically from its presuppositions. He conceives of God as both the source and fulfillment of life, as creator and judge of the world.<sup>3</sup> Human beings always stand before Him as created and judged.

According to Niebuhr, the ethics of Jesus has only one dimension, a vertical one, between man and God. It distinguishes itself from a "prudent ethic," which deals with present realities. "It has nothing to say about the relativities of politics and economics, nor of the

<sup>1</sup> Expository Times, Vol. 48, 1937, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 47-48.



necessary balances of power which exist and must exist in even the most intimate relationships."<sup>1</sup> When Jesus laid down an absolute ethic,<sup>2</sup> he did not consider whether it would be practical enough to meet the immediate problems and need of human life and society. It has an ~~eschatological~~ element and even basis.<sup>3</sup> Therefore Niebuhr maintains that it is impossible to make a prudent ethic out of the teaching of Jesus.

...the ultimate moral demands upon man can never be affirmed in terms of a unity and a possibility.<sup>4</sup> ...that social and prudential possibility has been read into the admonition of Jesus by liberal Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

...The effort to elaborate the religio-moral thought of Jesus into a practical scoio-moral or even politico-moral system usually has the effect of blunting the very penetration of his moral insight.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>

"According to Prof. McCown, Niebuhr has absolutized a relative ethic, for much of the ethical teaching of Jesus was relative to his world view, i.e. to the idea that the Kingdom of God was about to come. Much of it was interim ethic. On the other hand, the eschatology of Jesus apparently was not consistent, and did not determine all his ethical teachings. Some prudent elements are not absent." Cassady, "The Theological Basis of Jesus' Ethics in Emil Brunner" (an unpublished B. D. thesis, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Cal., 1939), p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>

Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., pp. 58-60.

<sup>5</sup>

Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>6</sup>

Ibid., p. 58.



Like Karl Barth, Niebuhr believes that the ethic of Jesus "is not applicable to the problems of contemporary society nor yet to any conceivable society."<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand, he maintains that this ethic is relevant to a social and prudential ethic. It serves as a standard, a norm, through which the realities of the world of human egoism, and the injustices and tyrannies arising from it, are fully revealed. It is a challenge and a judgment, for the ethic of Jesus offers valuable insight into and sources of criticism for a prudential social ethic which deals with present realities. According to the prophetic interpretation, God is involved in every moral situation. Thus every temporal value is grounded in and points toward a perfection which is not realized in any historic situation but indicates "impossible possibility," though rather an approximate one.<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr's conception of the kingdom of God is like his conception of Jesus' ethic; it is transcendent. To Him, the apocalypse is a mythical expression of the impossible possibility.

The kingdom of God is always at hand in the sense that impossibilities are really possible, and lead to new actualities in given moments of history. Nevertheless every actuality of history

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<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.



reveals itself, after the event, as only an approximation of the ideal; and the Kingdom of God is therefore not here. It is in fact always coming but never here. To quote in a different way, "His kingdom of God is always a possibility in history, because its heights of pure love are organically related to the experience of love in all human life, but it is always beyond every historical achievement."<sup>1</sup>

It both transcends and is relevant to the world. As a matter of fact, history is not self-derived and self-fulfilling, but it points to sources and goals beyond itself.

Niebuhr seems to define the kingdom of God in terms of absolute love, which is the law of life--"the norm of one's behavior."<sup>2</sup>

Anything less than perfect love in human life is destructive of life.<sup>3</sup> ...He [Jesus] proclaims the coming kingdom in which there will be no enmity. Therefore he commands His disciples to love their enemies as a testimony to God and the fundamental law of the kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

He admits the possibility of love, but denies the possibility of a society fully controlled by Christian love.

...the kingdom of God reveals not only the law of life, but it is also a revelation of mercy and grace in human history. It reveals the infinite possibilities under which all human actions take place. Every deed of

<sup>1</sup>Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 42.<sup>2</sup>Oxford, Christian Faith and the Common Life, p. 97.<sup>3</sup>Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 71.<sup>4</sup>Oxford, op. cit., p. 94.



sacrifice, every genuine martyrdom, and every act of voluntary vicariousness is a symbol of these possibilities.<sup>1</sup>

...The kingdom comes by way of crucifixion and martyrdom. It demands courageous obedience even to death, which will force the evil of the world to yield, in order to make a new and higher justice in history possible.<sup>2</sup>

The entrance into the kingdom requires repentance, which is prompted by the judgment of God. "Without the acceptance of that judgment--that is, without repentance--there is no entrance into the kingdom."<sup>3</sup> In Christ the kingdom of God came to history, but with repentance the kingdom of God comes to us.<sup>4</sup> The prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come", is a constant pressure upon the conscience of man in every action.

Niebuhr gives due emphasis to the relation of the kingdom of God to history. To him, the kingdom of God is not simply trans-historical. It is involved in every moment of history. He admits the tension between the historical and the transcendent. History includes time and eternity, but "a relationship of time and eternity, of history and supraphistory, is to him anathema."<sup>5</sup> There is

<sup>1</sup> Oxford, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, pp. 285-286.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, review of Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, in Religion in Life (1939), p. 137.



always a conflict between time and eternity, between the kingdom of evil and the kingdom of God. We live in a world in which the kingdom of God is not established, in which the fate of the kingdom of love is crucified.<sup>1</sup> When the kingdom of God enters the world, it is judged by the world and found to be dangerous to all of its tentative harmonies and relative justice. But it also judges the world in the very moment in which the world is condemning it.<sup>2</sup> The kingdom of God is man's obedience to God, but the world is man's rebellion against God.

Regarding the problem of sin, Niebuhr, like many students of the social gospel, perceives the stubbornness of evil in the human situation, but refuses to ascribe its sole cause to the traditional belief of the sinfulness of man after his fall, as if finitude in itself was the essence of sinfulness. He takes it that the root of man's sin lies in the act of rebellion against God, and in his pretension of being God and of making himself the center of existence.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Niebuhr sees in the myth of the fall the

<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>3</sup> Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 83, 98. "This pretension would be impossible if man were not created in the 'image of God.' That is, if he did not have capacities for self-transcendence which permitted him to see his finite existence under the perspective of its eternal essence. Men are also tempted to protest against their finiteness by seeking to make themselves infinite."



idea that "evil lies at the juncture of nature and spirit," in the sense that the peculiar and unique characteristics of human spirituality are both its good and evil tendencies, its finiteness and yearning for the eternal.<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr sees the good as well as the bad in human nature. His distinction between moral man and immoral society enables him to maintain a fully realistic view of the total human situation, and at the same time to do full justice to the real measure of good in human nature.<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr finds evil more stubborn and more destructive in the life of social groups than in the life of the individual. .... He claims that nations, classes, and races fall below the standards of the average members of these groups in their relationships with each other.<sup>3</sup>

To explain the fact, he claims that there are limitations in human nature which will always make it so. He is quite sure that evils of society are rooted in the egoistic impulses of the human heart. According to Prof. Bennett, Niebuhr completely escapes from any suggestion of an external explanation of evil which finds its source only in social institutions.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, Niebuhr ascribes to human nature the

<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> Bennett, "The Chief Contributions of Niebuhr," Religion in Life, Vol. VI (1937), p. 268.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 272.



cause and source of the social evils. He states: "Human evil and sin are recognized primarily as an individual fact, and only secondarily as a social fact. This individualism is both the virtue and vice of Christian morality."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Niebuhr admits that there is great good in human nature. He recognizes that man, though moral in his personal life, may himself be forced into unethical action in his group,--such as the adoption of slavery or the general support of a war of invasion. Despite this fact, he sees that:

...impulse of sympathy and generosity are a part of picture and that their scope can be considerably enlarged by education and religion. He shows the ethical and theological theories which take full account of the better side of human nature are far sounder than those based upon pure pessimism and cynicism.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, he believes that it is possible to achieve a high degree of justice and social harmony in the world. The love ethic of Jesus will tame violence and affect the course of social events. He advocates love and the doctrine of forgiveness as the crown of Christian ethics. He definitely rejects insurrectionism as a method of bringing about social change, although he follows Marxism in his political thinking.

<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr and Others, Christianity and the Social Revolution, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> Bennett, op. cit., p. 274.



Niebuhr not only lays emphasis on forgiveness, but also on grace. The kingdom of God, according to Niebuhr, will be established not through human love but by the grace of God.<sup>1</sup> In the face of sin, God is the source of both forgiveness and grace, the assurance of which makes it possible for us to go on now with joy and gratitude. All these views of Niebuhr point to the emphasis on the intrinsic worth of the present. To quote Bennett, "There is healing for those who face present suffering; there is joy mediated by the great and common things of life; there is forgiveness for those who know the grace of God."<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr touches but slightly on the question of Christology. Christ, for him, is just the bearer of the transcendent ideal of pure love interpreted in terms of unselfishness and non-resistance.<sup>3</sup> He is the revelation of the impossible possibility which the Sermon on the Mount elaborates in ethical terms.<sup>4</sup> Niebuhr waves aside the prudential element in Jesus' teachings, though he admits their presence. One cannot rationalize Christ. He can only be taken by faith. According to Niebuhr, Christ as a mythical

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<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> Bennett, op. cit., p. 281.

<sup>4</sup> Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 119-120.



term seems to be more important than the historical Jesus. Niebuhr "has no clear place for the aggressiveness of Jesus in dealing with evil."<sup>1</sup>

Let us summarize regarding Niebuhr, as follows:

(1) To criticize Niebuhr fairly is difficult, on account of the dialectical structure of his thought; usually the fault that one finds with his idea at one point is corrected somewhere else. Moreover, his thought is in process of continuous development, and its meaning is enlarging. Therefore, it is hard to criticize him without knowing his intellectual temperament.

(2) Niebuhr has written no ethics; yet he has made real contributions in dealing with the Christian ethic of love as well as with the place of reason in religion. He is such a daring, honest, and provoking thinker of religion that he gives to the discouraged Christian world at least a glimpse of hope--a hope for the "immediate possibilities of a higher good in every given situation" through the application of the love ethic of Jesus.

(3) Niebuhr deals with the problem of sin too narrowly in two ways: first, he defines it in terms of actual rebellion against God, of making oneself God; second, like many other theologians, he reduces the whole human problem

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<sup>1</sup>

Bennett, op. cit., p. 281.



to the question of individual sin, and gives little consideration to the evils of social institutions.

(4) God, for Niebuhr, is both creator and judge, but he gives no place to the daily creativity of God.

(5) Niebuhr presents Jesus as a mythical figure at the sacrifice of the historical Jesus. He sees practically no activity in Jesus, especially no dealing with evil.



CHAPTER V  
EVALUATION AND SUMMARY



## CHAPTER V

### EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

In the foregoing examination of the various leading interpretations of the kingdom of God, each individual writer has been discussed at length. Therefore, in conclusion this section merely attempts a brief evaluation of the whole subject under consideration.

To begin with, the kingdom of God is capable of various interpretations, according to differing viewpoints. The question as to whether the kingdom of God is to be regarded as a pure spiritual reality or a future order of existence--whether the kingdom is to come by human effort in coöperation with the work of God or as a gift from God, whether it is to come gradually or as the result of a cosmic crisis, and what the relation of the kingdom is to human progress--depends entirely on the kind of biblical passages chosen. A certain set of passages may stand for a certain idea, while other passages may stand for another idea. Moreover, one also finds that within a certain passage there is a possibility of multiple explanations. Professor Dodd's translation of Mark is an excellent example of this



uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> To be concrete, there are three general trends of thought regarding the meaning of the kingdom of God, as has been mentioned in various sections of this thesis. To sum up briefly:

(1) The kingdom of God is an order of life which already exists wherever God's will is done. It is an inner relation with God, a reign of God in the hearts of men which men accept, seeking to fulfill His will. Ritschl, who has had an extraordinary influence upon Christian thinking and action during the last fifty years at least, insists in holding this view. He gives no room for apocalyptic eschatology in his theology. He considers it as non-essential. Nor does he hint at any obligation on the part of Christians regarding the evils of society. His sole ambition is that the Christian achieves "religious dominion over the world...through faith in the loving providence of God, through the virtues of humility and patience, and, finally, through prayer...."<sup>2</sup> This spiritualizing interpretation of the teaching of Jesus constitutes a gospel which is indifferent to social injustices and evils. Prof. Bennett thinks Dodd's position is an interesting revival of the Rischlian conception, though it is

<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:15 may mean either that the kingdom of God is very near or that it is here. For Dodd, it means that the kingdom has come and is here. (Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom of God, pp. 44-45.)

<sup>2</sup> Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, p. 670.



different in certain ways. For Dodd also the kingdom is not a human thing,--not a community of mankind, not an order of society, and not something which men can establish,--but something which God gives. It is not a future event or state, but rather a present reality; the kingdom for him has come with the advent of Jesus. Like Ritschl, Dodd believes that it is the acceptance of the reign of God by those who have heard the word which God has spoken in the person of Jesus. The difference between them is that Dodd deals with the problem in the sense of development of history; it is manifested in the series of historical events and by continuous life of the Church.

(2) The kingdom of God was, for Jesus, wholly future, an apocalyptic kingdom. This type of interpretation usually includes the idea that it was to come by supernatural, catastrophic, miraculous action.

...[it] stresses greatly the idea of conflict, and depicts the final consummation in the terms of a world-shaking battle in which the forms of righteousness--either the Chosen People or the Messiah, or angels, or God himself will slay or finally crib and confine the forces of evil.<sup>1</sup>

The characteristic representatives for this school of thought are Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, and Alfred Loisy. Their conclusions seem to be that Jesus had no social

<sup>1</sup>

Weigle, Jesus and the Educational Method, p. 83.



or ethical message for today. If Jesus' ethic was only an interim ethic, intended to guide his followers through the woes of the last days into a transcendent realm of God, how could one expect that there were social principles to be derived from his teachings? In this respect, Prof. McCown thinks that Schweitzer is like all thoroughgoing eschatologists--abstractly logical, but concretely false, because they are out of touch with life.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Jesus had no ethic which is relevant to the task of changing society.<sup>2</sup>

One must do justice to the school of thoroughgoing eschatology. Jesus probably did think in terms of an apocalyptic kingdom which was expected to come soon, in a catastrophic manner, by act of God and not by human effort. But Schweitzer's presentation of Jesus is only one-sided. Schweitzer put all the teachings in the one-sided scheme of his eschatology. On the other side of the issue, Jesus was not obsessed by apocalyptic expectation. There is much in His life and teaching which is not affected by it.<sup>3</sup> Rather, He put moral and spiritual content into the apocalyptic

<sup>1</sup>

McCown, Lecture Notes.

<sup>2</sup>

I do not see the difference between the interim ethic which applies merely to a short period and the absolute ethic held by Niebuhr which is inapplicable to the situation in which we find ourselves. The practice of an absolute ethic cannot be approached if one considers only faroff consequences.

<sup>3</sup>Bennett, Social Salvation, p. 77.



teaching and thus gave new meaning to it. Ernst von Dobschütz, in his Eschatology of the Gospels, advocates this type of thought. Jesus here is said to preach a "transmuted eschatology." The kingdom was not absolutely in the future and other-worldly, but in some true sense already present on this earth in the person of Jesus and in the experience of His followers. The kingdom of God is not awaited as a purely external catastrophe, but is already taking place inwardly.

In supplementing and amending Dobschütz' position, Rudolf Otto contends that the kingdom of God is a pure mirum, the purely miraculous thing (Wunderding), mysterion. "...ordinary things can exist only either in the past or the present. Purely future things cannot come out of future to work in the present. A Wunderding can do both."<sup>1</sup> Otto has emphasized the spiritual element in Jesus' conception.

...the kingdom of God is neither a state, nor a place, but a spiritual power; it is the reign of God. This does not mean, with Ritschl, that God was to reign only in the heart. Nor does it mean, with Schweitzer, that he was to reign only in an otherworldly, transcendent realm.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus expected this divine power to work on earth as it was already working. Therefore, the ethics of Jesus were not purely for the interim. To regard Jesus' ethic as timeless

<sup>1</sup> Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, pp. 72-73.

<sup>2</sup> McCown, Lecture Notes.



and unconditioned historically will make possible its application to all ages instead of merely to a short period. On the whole, Dobschütz' and Otto's positions are reinterpretations of Schweitzer's school of thought. All of them believe in a consistent eschatology; Dobschütz believes in eschatology transmuted; Otto believes in eschatology realized on this earth.

The question of Jesus' eschatology is debatable.

Prof. McCown states:

Unfortunately, we shall never be able to learn exactly what his eschatology was, since the views of his earlier followers have unconsciously modified their reports of his sayings. But, much as we should like to know, in order to set at rest the endless discussion of the subject, for practical religious reasons it is better that we do not know. For it is not the program, but the ethical attitudes and the spiritual dynamic of Jesus which are religiously valuable.<sup>1</sup>

In answer to the question as to what religious values there are in the apocalyptic form of thought, let us note the following:

1. It made possible the presentation of an absolute ethics, which is applicable to all ages and situations, though it is not applicable without compromise in any age or situation.

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McCown, Lecture notes.



2. It preserves the tension between optimism and pessimism, which is one of the chief reasons for the adequacy of Christianity.
3. It preserves the importance of the temporal process as opposed to the pantheistic tendency to allow the absorption of the world of time into eternity.<sup>1</sup>

(3) The kingdom of God has been identified with the new social order which men as co-workers with God seek to build in this world. Here there is a close relationship between the idea of the kingdom and the general expectation of social progress. For example: Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch, the most passionate social gospel propagandist, has described the kingdom of God as "the Christian transfiguration of the social order." Prof. McCown describes it as "the coming of the reign of God on earth," for which He calls men to adopt the way of the cross, to serve, to sacrifice, and to work with God as well as to let God work through them before the kingdom could be brought about.<sup>2</sup> In the main, all who favor this view put their emphasis upon the social hope within history. The realization of that social hope is thought of in terms of the gradual development already in

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett, Social Salvation, pp. 75-78.

<sup>2</sup> McCown, The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 378.



existence rather than in terms of some divine act which will not come until the end of time. A man like Rauschenbusch not only identifies the hope for the kingdom of God with the hope for a new social order, but he also regards it as imminent. His optimism, like that of many liberal Christian thinkers, was threatened by the World War.<sup>1</sup> Their sense of what was possible in history became powerless, and their absolute dependence on the effort of man became naught. Moreover, the social gospel has interpreted the teachings of Jesus as applicable to human society and to its need and situation. "There has been much talk of the imitation of Christ, of 'what would Christ do?', of following 'in his steps', of the 'Jesus-way-of-life.'"<sup>2</sup> But these believers forgot that Jesus lived in an age which was quite different from ours, and His absolute love ethics is not applicable to the society of today, though Reinhold Niebuhr admits the possibility. Furthermore, the liberal students of social gospel overlook the fact that the kingdom is God's gift, and is not something that men can make of material substance.

Today there is a perceptible movement away from the position of liberalism. Doubt has arisen, and is making itself strongly felt, as to whether the social gospel sufficiently interprets the concept of God's kingdom. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett, The Church through Half a Century, pp. 117-119.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 123.



quite clear that Jesus might have believed in an apocalyptic kingdom and in the kingdom as the reign in the heart of men; but it is doubtful whether he identified the kingdom with a new social order to be built on this earth. The Oxford Conference, in which Niebuhr's influence is strongly felt, believes that "every tendency to identify the kingdom of God with a particular social structure or economic mechanism must result in moral confusion...."<sup>1</sup> Similarly Madras declares:

We cannot identify the Kingdom of God with a particular system, either the status quo, or any revolutionary system we desire to bring about. If any of the present panaceas offered to man were realized, even in its pure form, it would not be the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom would still judge it, for the Kingdom is the ultimate order; all else is relative.<sup>2</sup>

Although Jesus might not have identified the kingdom of God with a new social order on earth, it would be impossible to imagine that He did not have a social message for us. As Prof. Bennett says, "The Social Gospel is an inevitable development of the teachings of Jesus. If we are to have his concern for the real welfare of persons we must take whatever measures are necessary to overcome the evils which crush persons now."<sup>3</sup> Manifestation of God's love for

<sup>1</sup> Oldham, The Oxford Conference Official Report, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Madras Conference, The World Mission of the Church, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> Bennett, Social Salvation, p. 90. [To the writer, Jesus may have a message for our social gospel, but it is a part of his total message.]



the less fortunate, and His justice on behalf of the weak and oppressed are the commands of the prophetic religion and the responsibility of all privileged Christians. Besides, God must have had a plan for man; otherwise, he would not have created him. Therefore it would be unbelievable that God would not like to see His will fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven. To quote the Madras Conference:

It is not enough to say that if we change the individual we will of necessity change the social order. That is a half truth. For the social order is not entirely made up of individuals now living. It is made up of inherited attitudes which have come down from generation to generation through customs, laws and institutions, and these exist in large measure independently of individuals now living. Change those individuals and you do not of necessity change the social order unless you organize those changed individuals into collective action in a wide-scale, frontal attack upon those corporate evils. Social change will come from individual change only when the content of social change is put within the concept and fact of individual change.<sup>1</sup>

Care must be taken not to identify this social activity with the kingdom of God, for social activity is the inevitable result of the kingdom--not the kingdom itself. What, then, did Jesus mean by "kingdom of God?" It is generally agreed by some modern scholars that the primary meaning of the kingdom of God as proclaimed in the Gospel is the kingship of God. That is the fundamental significance both of

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Madras Conference, op. cit., p. 107.



the Hebrew malkuth and of the Greek basileia (or activity), of which "kingdom" is the translation. The phrase connotes the kingly rule, the reign, the sovereignty of God. It is not a name for a geographical area or political unit, nor does it denote those over whom God rules; but it is rather to symbolize His kingly power (Mark 9:1) and active will, in manifestation or exercise of His sovereignty, and an order of life in which God's will is supreme. Tillich says: "The Kingdom of God is a symbol of the transcendent meaning of existence."<sup>1</sup>

"The reign of God both has come and is coming,"--so maintains the Oxford Conference.

...It is an established reality in the coming of Christ and the presence of his spirit in the world. It is, however, still in conflict with a sinful world which crucified its Lord, and its ultimate triumph is still to come. In so far as it has come, the will of God as revealed in Christ (that is, the commandment of love) is the ultimate standard of Christian conduct.<sup>2</sup>

The Madras Conference seeks to form a new concept of the kingdom of God by combining all those three trends of interpretations which have been advocated by various outstanding scholars. Unlike the apocalyptic school of thought, Madras recognizes the social significance of Christianity

<sup>1</sup> Flew, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," Expository Times, Vol. 46 (1934-35), p. 214; cf. Weigle, Jesus and the Educational Method, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Oldham, op. cit., p. 76.



and that the kingdom of God is Jesus' answer to the world's ills, both collective and individual, although Madras is careful to avoid the danger of identifying the kingdom with a certain social system. The kingdom is within history as well as beyond history. By "beyond", it does not necessarily mean "other-worldly," but it means "eternity". "Eternity" should come within time and within the world. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This prayer signifies the purpose of God. Moreover, the kingdom of God, as Madras sees it, is both present and future,--a growth and a final consummation by God; a task as well as a hope; a gift to be accepted and a task to be achieved. One must work for it, and one must wait for it.<sup>1</sup> This is possibly what Jesus really meant by the term, kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup>

Madras Conference, op. cit., p. 106.



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